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LETTERS OF LITERARY MEN

SIR THOMAS MORE

TO

ROBERT BURNS

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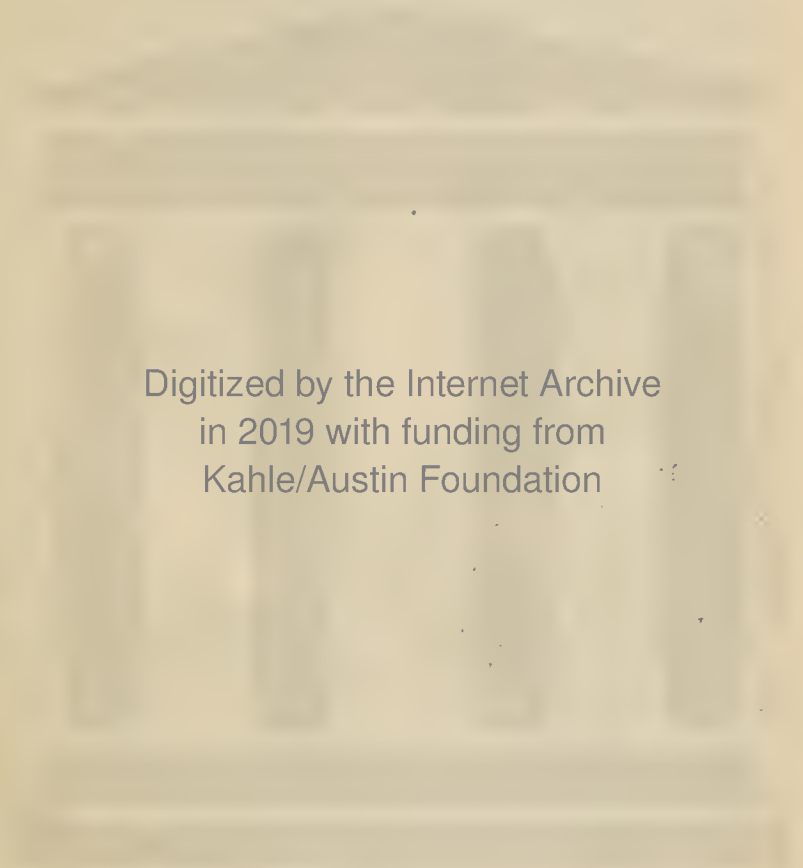
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LADY MARY WORTLEY MONTAGU.

# LETTERS OF LITERARY MEN

SIR THOMAS MORE  
TO  
ROBERT BURNS

Arranged and Edited by  
FRANK ARTHUR MUMBY



LONDON  
GEORGE ROUTLEDGE & SONS LIMITED  
NEW YORK: E. P. DUTTON & CO



PR 102 M8 v.1

To  
My Mother

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## Preface

THE object of the present work is to illustrate the history of English literature, from the end of the fifteenth to the beginning of the twentieth century, by means of letters. The editor has sought to bring the reader, as far as possible, into personal touch with the great authors of the last four hundred years—for letters, as James Howell said as long ago as 1645, ‘may more than history enclose,’ and tell their story ‘by a more gentle and familiar way’. Too often the works of a distinguished writer create a false impression of his character and personality; but, generally speaking, he stands revealed in his letters. The correspondence of Swift—especially his correspondence with Stella—helps us to gain a more agreeable view of the great Dean than that presented by some of his books; the letters of Pope show that the “wicked asp of Twickenham,” as Lady Mary Wortley Montagu called him, was not without his lovable qualities; the correspondence of Tom Hood reveals the tragic element that lurked behind each issue of the *Comic*; and in similar fashion there are little touches of human nature in the letters of other authors which

give us a better idea of the men and women themselves than any biographer could hope to do. It is hardly profitable to go farther back than Sir Thomas More, the correspondence of the earlier writers being rare and impersonal. 'Paper was too valuable a commodity', as Dr. Gairdner observes in his introduction to the *Paston Letters*, 'and writing too great a labour, to be wasted on things irrelevant'. Of Chaucer, for example, not a letter remains. The great Elizabethans were more prolific, but of Shakespeare, as of Chaucer, no letter can be traced—apart from the dedicatory epistles now reprinted. From Shakespeare onwards it is believed that no serious omission will be found in the following work, though, of course, the collection could be added to almost indefinitely. Most of the letters have been chosen not merely with a view of throwing light on the personality of the writers, but also on the literary world of their day: to show their great friendships, and their little jealousies—and to the honour of English authorship be it said that our literature in its highest development has been remarkably free from pettiness of this description. Shakespeare, so far as we know, never displayed any jealousy of his contemporaries, while Ben Jonson, unspoiled by his own genius, honoured himself when he said of the greater poet, 'I loved the man, and do honour to his memory on this side idolatry as much as I can'. Among lesser men, on the other hand, there have been discreditable squabbles in the literary



history of almost every age, especially during the days of Queen Anne and the first two Georges—as not a few of the letters here reprinted bear witness.

The editor's spare hours of the last four years will not have been spent in vain if some useful object has been attained in thus bringing together a representative collection of letters, scattered up to now among hundreds of miscellaneous volumes, many of which have long since been out of print. Some of the more interesting examples—Crabbe's second letter to Burke, for instance, of the existence of which even the poet's son and biographer appears to have been unaware—have been lying in neglected books for many years, practically unknown to the present generation. The work also serves, to some extent, to show how the art of letter-writing itself has developed since Sir Thomas More wrote that pathetic little note 'wyth a cole', from his prison in the Tower in 1535. Of the various collections published in the past,—and here made some use of, but only where it was possible to verify by reference to original sources—by far the best known is Mr. W. Baptiste Scoones's excellent *Four Centuries of English Letters*, published in 1880. Hitherto, however, all such collections have been of a miscellaneous character—historical, military, social, scientific and literary—and questions of copyright have prevented even the most recent work of the kind (*The British Letter Writers*, published in 1882) from representing at all adequately

the leading authors of the last century. Happily the present editor has not been handicapped in this fashion, but has been able to include very many copyright letters in the companion volume, illustrating our nineteenth century literary history. His sincerest thanks are due to a large number of distinguished authors and publishers for permission so generously given, and full acknowledgment is made in the preface to the second volume, and in the introductory notes to the letters throughout the book. The second volume begins with Fanny Burney, who makes a good bridge between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and ends with Robert Buchanan, who, with Ruskin, lived long enough to link the twentieth century with the literary glories of the nineteenth.

As for the present volume, the editor is specially indebted to Mr. Warwick Bond, and the Delegates of the University Press at Oxford, for permission to print two of the letters from Mr. Bond's edition of Lyly's Works ; to Mr. Edmund Gosse and Mr. Heinemann for the letters selected from Mr. Gosse's *Life and Letters of John Donne* ; to Mr. Austin Dobson for Fielding's last letter, as given in Mr. Dobson's 'Chiswick Press' edition of the *Journal of a Voyage to Lisbon* ; to Mr. Murray for the letters from Mr. Rashleigh Holt-White's *Life and Letters of Gilbert White* ; and to Mr. Joseph Knight, as editor of *Notes and Queries*, for Smollett's autobiographical letter to an American correspondent.

*PART I*

Sir Thomas More to Ben Jonson

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SIR THOMAS MORE—ROGER ASCHAM—JOHN LYLY—EDMUND  
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FRANCIS BEAUMONT—BEN JONSON.



## SIR THOMAS MORE

1478-1535

SIR THOMAS MORE succeeded Wolsey as Lord Chancellor of England thirteen years after the production of his greatest literary effort, the *Utopia*—the origin of the term now used in all the languages of Europe to denote a social state of ideal perfection. When Henry VIII resolved to separate the English Church from that of Rome, Thomas More refused to acknowledge the headship assumed by the King, and was accordingly committed to the Tower, whence he sent the following touching letter to his daughter. Every attempt to induce him to be unfaithful to what he held to be the truth proved unavailing, and on July 7, 1535, he was beheaded. 'With all my Protestant zeal', wrote Lord Campbell in his *Lives of the Chancellors* rather more than three hundred years later, 'I must feel a higher reverence for Sir Thomas More than for Thomas Cromwell or Cranmer'.

### SIR THOMAS MORE

[Written 'wyth a cole . . . to hys doughter mistres Margaret Roger, within a whyle after he was prisoner in the towre']

1535.

MYNE OWN GOOD DOUGHTER,—

Our Lorde be thanked I am in good helthe of bodye, and in good quiet of minde: and of all worldly thynges I no more desyer than I have. I beseche hym make you all mery in the hope of heuven. And such thynges as I somewhat longed to talke with you all, concerning the worlde to come, our Lorde put them into your myndes, as I truste he dothe and better to by hys holy spirite: who blesse you and preserve you all. Written wyth a cole by your tender loving father, who in hys pore prayers forgetteth none of you all, nor your babes, nor your nurses, nor your good husbandes, nor your good husbandes' shrewde wyves, nor your fathers shrewde wyfe neither, nor our other frendes. And thus fare ye hartely well for lacke of paper.

THOMAS MORE, Knight.



## ROGER ASCHAM

1515-1568

ROGER ASCHAM was born in the year in which Sir Thomas More wrote the second book of his *Utopia*, and, like More, was distinguished both as a classical scholar and a writer of pure English prose. It says much for his astuteness and influence that the Latin secretaryship which he held under Edward VI should have been continued under Mary, notwithstanding his avowed profession of the reformed religion; and after Mary's death Elizabeth found him so useful in the double capacity of secretary and tutor, that she is said to have exclaimed, on hearing of his death, that she 'would rather have thrown £10,000 in the sea, than have lost her Ascham'. It is a pity that no answer can be found to the following ingenious appeal to Elizabeth, but apparently no favourable reply was sent. Ascham's principal work, *The Scholemaster*, a treatise on classical education, was published by his widow two years after his death. His *Toxophilus*, which also ranks among English classics, is a treatise in defence of an art in which he excelled; and when the work appeared in 1545, with its dedication to Henry VIII, the King 'did so well like and allow it'—to quote from Ascham's bold appeal to Henry's daughter—as to reward him with a pension of £10, which is equal to about £100 of our present money.

## ROGER ASCHAM TO QUEEN ELIZABETH

[*An appeal that failed*]

October 10, 1567.

MOST EXCELLENT PRINCE, MY BEST LADY AND MISTRESS,—

May it please your highness; a double duty I owe to your majesty,—all faithfull obedience to your highness, my whole heart and goodwill for your singular goodness; the first as my sovereign over many other; the second as my dearest mistress above all other; for you are no more my sovereign by your authority, than you are and have been always my best mistress by your goodness. Yet, as I daily wish and pray that you may long and long remain both highest sovereign and greatest friend unto me, so for this time of reading of this letter, I humbly beseech your majesty to imagine that your highness were absent in some withdrawing chamber, and your goodness only present to read the same; for I write now not as to the queen to make any suit, but to my dearest friend to ask some counsel in a suit I would fain make to the queen. But surely I will make no suit to her highness before I ask counsel of her goodness; if you mislike it, I will not follow; if your goodness allow of it, her highness will grant

it, or else I will surely go without it ; and that because I would only be bound to her highness and your goodness, and to none other person for it ; no, not those two my greatest and best friends, my noble Lord of Leicester and good Mr. Secretary Cecill, greatest in authority, and best in goodwill to do any good thing for me : but only your goodness shall obtai'n it of her highness, or else it shall never be mine. And as for my suit, it shall neither be unreasonable for your goodness to ask, nor great for her highness to grant, nor intolerable to any other person ; it shall not be to enrich myself now, but only to leave some comfort to my good wife and children hereafter ; and your goodness may speak willingly, and ask boldly for me, for her highness hath promised already, as my good Lady Stafford heard, both courteously to hear and gladly to grant unto me and my children any fit and reasonable suit, which if it be liked and allowed by your wisdom, then helped forward by your goodness, of the good success thereof at her highness' hands I make no doubt at all.

My suit, with the occasion that moveth me to make it, and the necessity that driveth me to ask it is this ;—I wrote once a little book of shooting ; King Henry, her most noble father, did so well like and allow it, as he gave me a living for it ; when he lost his life I lost my living ; but noble King Edward again did first revive it by his goodness, then did increase it by his liberality ; thirdly, did confirm it by his authority under the great seal of England, which patent all this time was both a great pleasure and profit to me, saving that one unpleasant word in that patent, called 'during pleasure', turned me after to great displeasure ; for when King Edward went, his pleasure went with him, and my whole living went away with them both. But behold God's goodness towards me, and his providence over me, in Queen Mary, for her highness' sister's time, when I had lost all, and ncither looked nor hoped for anything again, all my friends being under foot, without any labour, without my knowledge I was suddenly sent for to come to the council. I came with all will, and departed with much comfort, for there I was sworn secretary for the Latin tongue, because some of them knew that King Edward had given me that office when I was absent in Germany, by good Mr. Secretary's procurement, and because some did think that I was fitter to do that office than those

were that did exercise it. When I saw other so willing to do for me, I was the bolder somewhat to speak for myself. I saw Winchester did like well the manner of my writing; I saw also that he only was *Dominus regit me* that time. I told him that my patent and living for my *Book of Shooting* was lost. Well, said he, cause it to be written again, and I will do what I can. I did so; and here I will open to your majesty a pretty subtlety in doing happily a good turn to myself whereat perchance your majesty will smile; for surely I have laughed at it twenty times myself and that with good cause, for I have lived somewhat the better for it ever since. I caused the same form of the patent to be written out, but I willed a vacant place to be left for the sum. I brought it so written to the bishop; he asked me why the odd sum was not put in. Sir, quoth I, the fault is in the writer, who hath done very ill beside, to leave the vacant place so great, for the old word *ten* will not half fill the room, and therefore surely, except it please your lordship to help to put in twenty pounds, that would both fill up the vacant place well now and also fill my purse the better hereafter, truly I shall be put to new charges in causing the patent to be new written again. The bishop fell in a laughter, and forwith went to Queen Mary and told what I had said, who, without any more speaking, before I had done her any service, of her own bountifull goodness made my patent twenty pounds by year during my life, for her and her successors. I have oft told this tale to many of my friends, for I think it a part of honesty to say well of them that have been so willing to do well for others. Some that have heard me tell this have said unto me, Surely seeing King Henry, King Edward, and Queen Mary, to whom you were scarce known, to whom you had done no service except in teaching King Edward to write, were so beneficial to grant, to augment, to confirm, this living unto you, we are sure that Queen Elizabeth, as every one of them three did always better one another, so she alone hath bettered them all, or else the fault is in yourself not speaking, and not in her majesty for not doing the same; and surely it is both a folly in you and an injury to her goodness, that through your own fault your *Book of Shooting* should be more bound to any other prince for divers causes than to her majesty. I answer my friends thus:—It is my own folly indeed, for nature hath made me

so loath to ask as no opportunity could ever make me to be bold, nor no necessity yet drive me to crave it. It is rather my grief to want myself than to wail to any other. It is my greater desire to satisfy by good will than to trouble with bold and busy suits; for in the so many fair years and days spent and past in the presence of my princc, I never opened my mouth to utter any suit to make myself rich, except it were for venison to make my friend merry: but behold, on the other side, her majesty's goodness and bounty, who hath given unto me many and great benefits, greater than I can deserve, and always given by her before they be asked by me; for as her goodness exceedeth far my desert, so her benefits prevent ever my suits; and therefore it is my chance always to be bound to give her thanks before I have need to make request unto her, and so I find always true that which her majesty hath said many times unto me,—the less I speak the more she will do; the more I seem to forget myself, the readier she will be to remember both me and mine. Well, saith one of my best and wisest friends, you say well; but if the Queen did not a great deal better, both you should do very ill now, and yours ever ill hereafter; but if you did consider your own case as you should, you would do otherwise therein than you do. You do not now live to yourself: God hath sent you a good wife and many fair children. You are well stepped into years; your wife is young, your children all within the years of innocence so not able to speak, not able to go, and one (though shortly) not yet born; and I have heard you oft say, if you now died, all the livings the price hath given you do die with you, and how yours shall then live, if you do not consider and help now, they may lament too late hereafter. . . . Do as I bid you, and ask what I shall with you, and if her goodness deny you, I will pay you yearly as much myself out of my own purse as that is which I would her highness should grant you, which, if I should die, I should be never a whit the poorer at the year's end, for she shall give not one penny from herself, but only that it would please her majesty to be contented that as her noble predecessors were good to you, so her successors likewisc should be good to your children, that such small living as her predecessors gave unto you before, her successors should suffer your children to enjoy the same hereafter. If her goodness grant, then shall



you never miss, nor be never the poorer for it, and her majesty, in the meanwhile, shall never not one penny lose thereby into her coffers than she doth at the present, and that by this way, her predecessors gave you twenty pounds a year for your *Book of Shooting*, and twenty pounds a year also, with a little more, for your Secretaryship, in the Latin tongue. Again, to pay to the Queen twenty pounds a year for a little farm that Queen Mary gave you by lease, and eighteen pounds a year for a little parsonage that your mother-in-law left you and your wife. Be humble suitor to her highness thus to deal and change with you. Give you again to her highness that which her predecessors gave unto you, and beseech her majesty in price thereof to grant and give unto your two sons the little farm for the one, and the parsonage for the other, to find them a school when you are gone. You yourself have been brought up in good learning and in best service ; yet if neither by your learning nor by your service you can be able to procure such two poor livings for two such pretty children, wise men shall judge you another day to have been neither wise by your learning nor happy by your service. I hear say you have written a book for the bringing up of your children, well commended by them that have seen it ; but what is that to purpose, to teach them gay things how they shall learn, and leave them nothing how they shall live ? You do well in the one ; do as well in the other, and then shall your children find you first a wise father for their learning, then a happy father for their living thus left them ; and though hereby you shall have no more in your own purse to spend yourself, yet shall you have more to your great comfort to leave to your children. On the other side, the Queen shall have a penny for a penny, yea, five-pence for a groat ; and herein shall be all the difference, that, as she found her predecessors good unto you, so shall she bind her successors to be good unto your children. And thus when the benefit of your *Book of Shooting* shall first be granted by good will by noble King Henry, then confirmed during pleasure by good King Edward, after assured during life by Queen Mary, at last established longer by most noble Queen Elizabeth ; then set out your *Book of Shooting* in print again, as many wish you should do, and in your preface let others understand what goodness you have received, particularly at these four most noble princes' hands, for the



labour you took and service you did by your bow and your book ; and when her majesty shall well weigh your suit, how necessary it is for you to ask, how reasonable it is for her to grant, yea, so reasonable as I believe my Lord Treasurer will not only allow it, but also further it, and be an earnest suitor for it. Surely I am of this opinion, that her goodness will grant more than you require, that is, freely to give you and yours as much as you ask, and not to take of you for that short time of life the poor livings that her predecessors gave unto you ; which if she do, then shall you both live with less care and die with much comfort, when you shall leave your children so well provided for by so noble a prince.

When my dear friend had given me this good advice, it sank so deep into my head as I could never since sleep well until I should impart the same unto your goodness ; for this is the suit I would fain make to her highness, and this is the counsel I would gladly ask of your goodness, whether I may make this suit to her highness or not ? Indeed, to make some suit to her highness your goodness did give me most friendly counsel the other day, and now I bring, I trust, a reasonable suit, which, if it be allowed of your goodness, yet am I never more abashed to say anything, especially for myself, in the presence of her highness. It is your goodness only must do that for me without all kind of suit, that is, to bring to pass that her highness grant me my suit before I speak for it, before I know of it ; therefore, if it may please your goodness to say but two words to her highness for me, as your goodness should truly say them, so her highness, I trust to God, will graciously hear them.

Most noble princess, time was when God and your own choice first did call him, and after did use him to do you much good for your learning : let time be that God and your good nature move you likewise to do him and his some comfort for their living, and do in time, for though your majesty shall have long and long time to do good to him and his, yet he is like to have no long time to ask for him and his. It is high time for him rather to enjoy somewhat than to ask anything. He asketh not much ; nothing for himself ; but something for his children, and that shall be not to give anything from yourself, but only to grant a little from your successors hereafter, even that which was given by your predecessors

before. . . . In God, in your goodness, and in this hope I do repose myself, as I trust to receive such answer by your goodness from her highness in this matter as shall glad my heavy heart, comfort my careful wife, sitting now at home weeping and praying for the good success of this my suit, and make happy my poor children for their good bringing up in virtue and learning, thereby to serve the better, God, their prince, and their country another day. God send your good majesty your own heart's desire. Your highness' most obedient subject, your goodness' most faithful servant,

R. ASKAM.

At Windsor, the tenth of October, 1567, to the Queen's most sacred Majesty.

ROGER ASCHAM TO HIS WIFE

*[On the death of his son]*

*[About November, 1568.]*

MINE OWN GOOD MARGARET,—

The more I think upon your sweet babe, as I do many times both day and night, the greater cause I always find of giving thanks continually to God for his singular goodness bestowed at this time upon the child, yourself, and me, even because it hath rather pleased him to take the child to himself into heaven, than to leave it here with us still on earth. When I mused on the matter as nature, flesh, and fatherly fantasy did carry me, I found nothing but sorrow and care, which very much did vex and trouble me, but at last forsaking these worldly thoughts, and referring wholly to the will and order of God in the matter, I found such a change, such a cause of joy, such a plenty of God's grace towards the child, and of his goodness towards you and me, as neither my heart can comprehend, nor yet my tongue express the twentieth part thereof.

Nevertheless, because God and good will hath so joined you and me together as we must not only be the one a comfort to the other in sorrow, but also partakers together in any joy, I could not but declare unto you what just cause I think we both have of comfort and gladness by that God hath so graciously dealt with us as he hath. My first step from care to comfort was this, I thought God had done his will with our

child, and because God by his wisdom knoweth what is best, and by his goodness will do best, I was by and by fully persuaded the best that can be is done with our sweet child, but seeing God's wisdom is unsearchable with any man's heart, and his goodness unspeakable with any man's tongue, I will come down from such high thoughts, and talk more sensibly with you, and lay open before you such matter as may be both a full comfort of all our cares past, and also a just cause of rejoicing as long as we live. You well remember our continual desire and wish, our nightly prayers together, that God would vouchsafe to us to increase the number of this world ; we wished that nature should beautifully perform the work by us ; we did talk how to bring up our child in learning and virtue ; we had care to provide for it ; so as honest fortune should favour and follow it. And see, sweet wife, how mercifully God has dealt with us in all points, for what wish could desire, what prayer could crave, what nature could perform, what virtue could deserve, what fortune could afford, both we have received, and our child doth enjoy already. And because our desire (thanked be God) was already joined with honesty, and our prayers mingled with fear, and applied always to the world too, the will and pleasure of God hath given us more than we wished, and that which is better for us now than we could hope to think upon ; but you desire to hear and know how marry, even thus, we desire to be made vessels to increase the world, and it hath pleased God to make us vessels to increase heaven, which is the greatest honour to man, the greatest joy to heaven, the greatest spite to the devil, the greatest sorrow to hell, that any man can imagine. Secondly, when nature hath performed what she would, grace stepped forth and took our child from nature, and gave it such gifts over and above the power of nature, as where it could not creep in earth by nature it was straitway well able to go to heaven by grace. It could not then speak by nature, and now it doth praise God by grace ; it could not then comfort the sick and careful mother by nature, and now through prayer is able to help father and mother by grace ; and yet, thanked be nature, that hath done all she could do, and blessed be grace that hath done more and better than we would wish she should have done. Peradventure yet you do wish that nature had kept it from death a little longer, yea, but grace

hath carried it where now no sickness can follow, nor any death hereafter meddle with it; and instead of a short life with troubles on earth, it doth now live a life that never shall end with all manner of joy in heaven.

And now, Margaret, go to, I pray you, and tell me as you think, do you love your sweet babe so little, do you envy his happy state so much, yea, once to wish that nature should have rather followed your pleasure in keeping your child in this miserable world, than grace should have purchased such profit for your child in bringing him to such felicity in heaven. Thirdly, you may say unto me; if the child had lived in this world, it might have come to such goodness by grace and virtue as might have turned to great comfort to us, to good service to our country, and served to have deserved as high a place in heaven as he doth now. To this, in short, I answer, ought we not in all things to submit to God's will and pleasure and thereafter to rule our affections, which I doubt not but you will endeavour to do? And therefore I will say no more, but with all comfort to you here, and a blessing hereafter, which I doubt not but is prepared for you.

Your dearly loving husband,

ROGER ASKAM.

To my dear wife, Mrs. Margaret Askam, these.

## JOHN LYLY

1553 (or 1554)–1606

It is only within comparatively recent years that John Lyly, the Euphuist, received the recognition to which he is entitled as the earliest writer—to use the words of Mr. R. Warwick Bond in the preface to his scholarly edition of Lyly's work, published a few years ago in three volumes by the Oxford University Press—who made Englishmen feel that prose was an art; who not only wrote what was, strictly speaking, the first original prose novel in the English language, but was 'the first regular English dramatist, the true inventor and introducer of dramatic style, conduct and dialogue; and, in these respects, the chief master of Shakespeare, and (but mainly through the latter) of Ben Jonson, and the attendant hosts of playwrights. There is no play before Lyly. He wrote eight; and immediately thereafter England produced some hundreds—produced that marvel and pride of the greatest literature in the world, the Elizabethan Drama.' Hitherto, Lyly's fame had too long been allowed to rest mainly on his *Euphues*, the romance in two parts which became the talk of Elizabeth's Court when it appeared in 1579 and 1580, and gave the name of Euphuism

to the exaggerated style of writing which was then in vogue. He was only about twenty-five when he wrote this romance. Lyly was disappointed in his hopes of an Oxford fellowship—expressed in the first of the following letters to Lord Burleigh—and after taking his M.A. in the summer of 1575 he withdrew to Cambridge, where he continued his studies. Burleigh subsequently found him a post in his household, and he became vice-master of the St. Paul's choristers, was returned to Parliament successively for Hindon, Aylesbury and Appleby, and died in November, 1606. The following letters—by the courtesy of the editor and the kind permission of the Oxford University Press—are printed from Mr. Warwick Bond's edition of Lyly's work.

JOHN LYLY: TO THE MOST ILLUSTRIOUS AND DISTINGUISHED  
PEER, LORD BURLEIGH, HIGH TREASURER OF ENGLAND,  
OF THE QUEEN'S MAJESTY'S PRIVY COUNCIL, AND HIS  
OWN REVERED PATRON.<sup>1</sup>

*[Appeals for an Oxford Fellowship]*

16 May, 1574.

In the gracious bounty shown, most noble Peer, to me your foster-son, and in your gratuitous and unlooked-for interest, effort, and extraordinary pains on my behalf, I recognise with all becoming humility your good and kindly disposition towards the followers of learning. And since this inconceivable indulgence of yours has far surpassed, not merely my deserts, but my hopes, and has granted at large what my modesty would never have asked, I rest in deepest debt to your honour, in a degree indeed which must always be beyond my poor opportunities of payment. And though it may seem, perhaps, the height of boldness and brazen effrontery for a rash and inexperienced youth, one who lacks the ripe judgment bestowed by advancing years, the sound character formed by chaste rule of life, the learned equipment furnished by the teaching of the 'arts, once more to assail and rudely importune with troublesome petitions a man of highest excellence and wisdom, a distinguished Peer, sleeplessly vigilant for the safety of the throne, the welfare of the State, the protection of all our fortunes; yet seeing that every great man's goodness is the common refuge—reflecting, moreover, that a lofty soul delights to overflow in bounty where it has once been generous—I approach with humble petition that excellence of yours which I have had every day in view, which I have never

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Bond's translation from Lyly's Latin letter.



doubted, and of which I have experienced many a proof, imploring with outstretched hands your aid, interest, and kindness. This is the sum, the cardinal point, the grand occasion—that your highness would deign to procure Her Most Gracious Majesty's mandatory letters (excuse the defect of latinity) to the authorities of Magdalen, that so under your auspices I may be quietly admitted as Fellow there. Such letters are, as it were, the strong foundation, you the lofty framework, to support my fortunes. Without this bulwark and buttress I collapse, I am ruined; for I can devise no remedy which may give me comfort, nor would Lyly be aught unless your Honour serve for his protecting deity, his blessed anchor, his saving constellation and pole-star shining before him. And so your Honour may command my body's service, dispose of my poor fortunes, and hold me as willing agent of your bidding. Raise up then with your wonted inconceivable kindness one towards whom your highness has ever been bounteous, and ready with help and attention, and who now casts himself suppliant-wise at your feet: I the while will lift up hands of prayer to the Supreme that Alexander's well-doing, Trajan's humanity, Nestor's years, Camillus' unshaken loftiness of soul, Solomon's wisdom, David's piety, Josiah's zeal in re-establishing the faith and keeping it pure, may be rivalled by your own. This in the meantime I promise and vow that there shall never be wanting on my part diligence in the acquisition of learning, a grateful purpose, the effort to carry tasks through, zeal in spreading abroad your praises, conscientious performances of duty nor faithful obedience. Farewell.

Your excellency's most obedient servant,

JOHN LYLY.

JOHN LYLY: 'TO THE RIGHT HONORABLE THE L. BURLEIGH,  
L. HIGH TRESORER OF ENGLAND'

*[An Attempt to clear the Writer's Character]*

July, 1582.

My duetie (right honourable) in most humble manner remembered.

It hath plesed my Lord, vpon what colour I cannot tell,

certaine I am vpon no cause, to be displeyd with me, yet grief whereof is more than the losse can be. But seeing I am to liue in the world, I must also be judged by the world, for that an honest seruaunt must be such as Cæsar wold haue his wif, not only free from synne, but from suspicion. And for that, I wish nothing more then to commit all my waies to your wisdom, and the devises of others to your judgment, I heere yield both my self and my soule, the one to be tried by your honnor, the other by the justic of God. And I doubt not but my dealings being sifted, the world shall find white meale, where others thought to shew cours branne. It may be manie things will be objected, but that any thing can be proved I doubt. I know your L. will soone smell devises from simplicity, trueth from trecherie, factions from just servic. And God is my witnes, before whome I speak, and before whome for my speach I shall aunswer, that all my thoughtes concerning my L. have byne ever reverent, and almost relligious. How I have dealt God knoweth and my Lady can conjecture so faithfullie, as I am as unspotted for dishonestie, as a suckling from theft. This conscinc of myne maketh me presume to stand to all trialls, ether of accomptes, or counsell, in the one I never vsed falshood, nor in the other dissembling. My most humble suit therefore vnto your L. is that my accusations be not smothered and I choaked in the smoak, but that they maie be tried in the fire, and I will stand to the heat. And my only comfort is that he that is wise shall judge trueth, whose nakednes shall manifest her noblenes. But I will not troble your honourable cares with so meinie idle wordes, only this upon my knees I ask, that your L. will voursalf to talk with me, and in all things will I shew my self so honest, that my disgrace shall bring to your L. as great mervell, as it hath done to me grief, and so thoroughly will I satisfie everie objection that your L. shall think me faithfull, though infortunat. That your honnor rest p'suaded of myne honest mynd, and my Lady of my true servic, that all things may be tried to the uttermost, is my desire, and the only reward I crave for my just (just I dare tearme it) servic. And thus in all humility submitting my Caus to your wisdom and my Conscinc to the triall. I commit your L. to the Almghtie.

Your L. most dutifullie to commaund,

JHON LYLY.



For that I am for some few daies going into the countrie, if your L. be not at leasure to admitt me to your speach, at my returne, I will give my most dutifull attendaunc, at which time, it may be my honesty may joyne with your L. wisdom, and both prevent, that nether, wold allow. In the meane season what color soever be alleged, if I be not honest to my L., and so meane to be during his plesure, I desire but your L. secret opinion, for as I know my L. to be most honorable, so I besech God in time he be not abused. Loth I am to be a prophitt, and to be a wiche I loath.<sup>1</sup>

Most dutifull to commaund

JHON LYLY.

### EDMUND SPENSER

1552 ?—1599

SPENSER, who was not many months older than Lyly, issued his *Shepherd's Calendar*—the first clear note of the great Elizabethan poetry—in the year which also produced the prose development in *Euphues*. Shakespeare was then little more than a schoolboy; Jonson was only about six years old. It was through Sir Philip Sidney's uncle, the Earl of Leicester, that Spenser went to Ireland in 1580, as secretary to the Lord Deputy, and Ireland remained his home until within a month of his death. Here Sir Walter Raleigh was for a time his neighbour, showing him his poem on *The Ocean's Love to Cynthia* (Elizabeth), and reading, in his turn, the first three books of Spenser's *Faery Queene*—with which his name is now for ever linked in the following prefatory letter. It was in Ireland, too, that Spenser met his wife, Elizabeth Boyle, whom he immortalised in his *Amoretti* and *Epithalamion*. Only four years after his marriage, O'Neill's insurgents, under the 'sugan' Earl of Desmond, burned the poet's Castle of Kilcolman—part of the Earl of Desmond's forfeited estates—and he was forced to flee for his life, with his wife and children, to Cork. That was in October, 1598, and early in the following December, Spenser started on his last journey to London, with a dispatch for the Government. Every student of literary history knows how, a month later, he died in pecuniary distress in a Westminster lodging, and was buried in the Abbey near his favourite Chaucer.

<sup>1</sup> This last sentence, taken in conjunction with a remark made by Gabriel Harvey the cantankerous poet—who was the friend and correspondent of Spenser—would seem to infer that the suspicion about which Lyly complains to Burleigh was due to some charge made against him of dabbling in the Black Art, though the body of the letter suggests a charge of dishonesty. It is quite possible that the whole trouble was due to some misunderstanding, for there is nothing to show that Lyly was ever dismissed for wrongdoing.

EDMUND SPENSER TO SIR WALTER RALEGH

[*'Expounding his whole intention' in 'The Faery Queene'*]

Januarie 23, 1589.

SIR,—

Knowing how doubtfully all Allegories may be construed, and the booke of mine, which I have entituled *The Faery Queene*, being a continued Allegorie, or darke conceit, I have thought good, as well for avoyding of jealous opinions and misconstructions, as also for your better light in reading thereof, (being so by you commanded) to discover unto you the generall intention and meaning, which in the whole course thereof I have fashioned, without expressing of any particular purposes, or by-accidents therein occasioned. The generall end therefore of all the booke, is to fashion a gentleman or noble person in vertuous and gentle discipline. Which for that I conceived shoulde be most plausible and pleasing, beeing coloured with an historicall fiction, the which the most part of men delight to read, rather for varietie of matter than for profit of the ensample: I chose the historie of king Arthure, as most fit for the excellencie of his person, beeing made famous by many men's former workes, and also furthest from the danger of envie, and suspicion of present time. In which I have followed all the antique poets historicall: first Homer, who in the persons of Agamemnon and Ulysses hath ensampled a good governour and a vertuous man, the one in his *Ilias*, the other in his *Odysseis*: then Virgil, whose like intention was to doe in the person of Æneas: after him Ariosto comprised them both in his Orlando: and lately Tasso dissevered them againe, and formed both parts in two persons, namely, that part which they in philosophy call *Ethice*, or vertues of a private man, coloured in his Rinaldo; the other named *Politice*, in his Godfredo. By ensample of which excellent Poets, I labour to pourtraict in Arthure, before he was king, the image of a brave knight, perfected in the twelve private morall vertues, as Aristotle hath devised; the which is the purpose of these first twelve bookes: which if I finde to be well accepted, I may be perhaps encoraged to frame the other part of the pollitike vertues in his person, after he came to bee king.

To some, I know, this Methode will seem displeasing, which had rather have good discipline delivered plainly in way of precepts, or sermoned at large, as they use, then thus clowdly enwrapped in Allegoricall devises. But such, mee seeme, should be satisfied with the use of these dayes, seeing all things accounted by their shoves, and nothing esteemed of, that is not delightfull and pleasing to common sense. For this cause is Xenophon preferred before Plato, for that the one, in the exquisite depth of his judgement, formed a Commune-wealth such as it should be ; but the other, in the person of Cyrus and the Persians, fashioned a government, such as might best be. So much profitable and gracious is doctrine by ensample then by rule. So have I laboured to doe in the person of Arthure : whom I conceive, after his long education by Timon (to whom he was by Merlin delivered to be brought up, so soone as he was borne of the Lady Igrayne) to have seene in a dreame or vision the Faery Queene, with whose excellent beautie ravished, hee awaking, resolved to seeke her out : and so, being by Merlin armed, and by Timon thoroughly instructed, he went to seeke her forth in Faery land. In that Faery Queene I mean Glory in my generall intention : but in my particular I conceive the most excellent and glorious person of our soveraine the Queene, and her Kingdome in Faery land. And yet, in some places else, I doe otherwise shadow her. For considering shee beareth two persons, the one of a most royall Queene or Empresse, the other of a most vertuous and beautifull lady, this latter part in some places I doe expresse in Belpheobe, fashioning her name according to your owne excellent concept of Cynthia (Phoebe and Cynthia being both names of Diana). So in the person of Prince Arthure I sette forth Magnificence in particular, which vertue, for that (according to Aristotle, and the rest) it is the perfection of all the rest, and containeth in it them all, therefore in the whole course I mention the deeds of Arthure appliable to that vertue, which I write of in that booke. But of the twelve other vertues I make xii. other knights the patrons, for the more varietie of the historie : Of which these three bookes containe three. The first, of the Knight of the Red-crosse, in whom I expresse Holinesse ; the second of Sir Guyon, in whome I set forth Temperance ; the third of Britomartis, a Lady knight, in whom I picture Chastitie. But because

the beginning of the whole worke seemeth abrupt and as depending upon other antecedents it need that yee know the occasion of these three knights severall adventures. For the Methode of a Poet historicall is not such as of an Historiographer. For an Historiographer discourseth of affaires orderly as they were done, accounting as well the times as the actions ; but a Poet thrusteth into the midst, even where it most concerneth him, and there recouring to the things forepast, and divining of things to come, maketh a pleasing analysis of all. The beginning therefore of my historie, if it were to be told by an Historiographer, should be the twelfth booke, which is the last ; where I devise that the Faery Queene kept her annuall feast twelve daies ; upon which twelve severall daies, the occasions of the twelve severall adventures hapned, which being undertaken by xii. severall knights, are in these twelve books severally handled and discoursed.

The first was this. In the beginning of the feast, there presented him selfe a tall, clownish younge man, who falling before the Queene of Faeries desired a boone (as the manner then was) which during that feast she might not refuse : which was that hee might have the atchievement of any adventure, which during that feast should happen ; that being granted he rested him selfe on the floore, unfit through his rustisite for a better place. Soone after entred a faire Ladie in mourning wecdes, riding on a white Asse, with a dwarfe behind her leading a warlike steed, that bore the Armes of a knight, and his speare in the dwarfes hand. She, falling before the Queene of Faeries, complayned that her father and mother, an ancient King and Queene, had bene by an huge dragon many yeers shut up in an brazen Castle, who thence suffered them not to issew : and therefore besought the Faery Queene to assigne her some one of the knights to take on him that exployt. Prescntly that Clownish person upstarting, desired that adventure ; whcreat the Queene much wondering, and the Lady much gaine-saying, yet he earnestly importuned his desirc. In the end the Lady told him that unlesse that armour which she brought would serve him (that is, the armour of a Christian man specified by Saint Paul, v. *Ephes.*), that he could not succeed in that enterprise : which being forthwith put upon him with due furnitures thereunto, he seemed the goodliest man in al that

company, and was well liked of the Lady. And eftesoones taking on him knighthood, and mounting on that strange Courser, he went forth with her on that adventure: where beginneth the first booke, viz.

A gentle knight was pricking on the playne, etc.

The second day there came in a Palmer bearing an Infant with bloody hands, whose Parents, he complained to have bene slaine by an enchauntresse called Acrasia: and therefore craved of the Faery Queene, to appoint him some knight to performe that adventure, which being assigned to Sir Guyon, he presently went foorth with the same Palmer: which is the beginning of the second booke and the subject thereof. The third day there came in a Groome, who complained before the Faery Queene, that a vile Enchaunter, called Busirane, had in hand a most faire Lady, called Amoretta, whom he kept in most gricvous torment. Whereupon Sir Scudamour, the lover of that Lady, presently tooke on him that adventure. But beeing unable to performe it by reason of the hard Enchauntments, after long sorrow, in the end met with Britomartis, who succoured him, and reskewed his love. . . .

This much, Sir, I have briefly over-run to direct your understanding to the wel-head of the History, that from thence gathering the whole intention of the conceit, ye may as in a handfull gripe all the discourse, which otherwise may happely seem tedious and confused. So humbly craving the continuance of your honourable favour towards me, and th' eternall establishment of your happiness, I humbly take leave.

Yours most humbly affectionate,

EDM. SPENSER.

## SIR WALTER RALEGH

1552-1618

SPENSER and Sir Walter Raleigh did not long remain in friendly neighbourhood in Ireland. The termination of this intimate association was a memorable journey to England, when Raleigh carried Spenser into the presence of Elizabeth—as related by the poet in his *Colin Clout's Come Home Again*, written upon his return to Ireland, in 1591. The letters of Raleigh, now reprinted, relate to his downfall when James, with a mind already poisoned against him, came to the throne. Raleigh's despair,



when arrested in July, 1603, is shown in his pathetic letter to his wife<sup>1</sup>; but every schoolboy knows how nobly he bore himself throughout his trial, and how, at the last moment—on the scaffold—his death sentence was commuted to imprisonment for life. It was during the long years of this imprisonment, spent with his wife and son in the upper storey of the Bloody Tower, that Raleigh wrote his *History of the World*, his *Discourse of War*, and other works which rank among his most important contributions to literature. Raleigh was again released in 1616, but only to embark on the ill-fated expedition to the Orinoco, which led him, on his return in 1618, to meet the fate which had befallen his old Court-rival, Essex, seventeen years before. 'This gives me no fear', he said, dauntless to the end, as he fingered the edge of the axe before placing his head on the block; 'it is a sharp and fair medicine to cure me of all my diseases'.

## SIR WALTER RALEGH TO HIS WIFE

*[A Farewell Letter from the Tower]*

July, 1603.

Receive from thy unfortunate husband these his last lines; these the last words that ever thou shalt receive from him. That I can live never to see thee and my child more!—I cannot. I have desired God and disputed with my reason, but nature and compassion hath the victory. That I can live to think how you are both left a spoil to my enemies, and that my name shall be dishonor to my child—I cannot. I cannot endure the memory thereof. Unfortunate woman, unfortunate child, comfort yourselves; trust God, and be contented with your poor estate.

Thou art a young woman, and forbear not to marry again. It is now nothing to me; thou art no more mine; nor I thine. To witness that thou didst love me once, take care that thou marry not to please sense, but to avoid poverty, and to preserve thy child. That thou didst also love me living, witness it to others—to my poor daughter, to whom I have given nothing; for his sake, who will be cruel to himself to preserve thee. Be charitable to her, and teach thy son to love her for his father's sake.

For myself, I am left of all men that have done good to

<sup>1</sup> Considerable doubt has been thrown on the authenticity of this letter, which was first printed in 1839 by Prof. John Brewer in Bishop Goodman's *Court of James I.* As, however, it is comparatively little known, we give it in preference to the undisputed farewell letter of the following December, which has frequently been reprinted.

many. All my good turns forgotten ; all my errors revived and expounded to all extremity of ill. All my services, hazards and expenses for my country—plantings, discoveries, fights, councils, and whatsoever else—malice hath now covered over. I am now made an enemy and traitor by the word of an unworthy man. He hath proclaimed me to be a partaker of his vain imaginations, notwithstanding the whole course of my life hath approved the contrary, as my death shall approve it. Woe, woe, woe be unto him by whose falsehood we are lost. He hath separated us asunder. He hath slain my honor ; my fortune. He hath robbed thee of thy husband, thy child of his father, and me of you both. O God, thou dost know my wrongs. Know, then, thou my wife, and child ; know, then, thou my King Lord and King, that I ever thought them too honest to betray, and too good to conspire against.

But, my wife, forgive thou all, as I do. Live humble, for thou hast but a time also. God forgive my Lord Harry, for he was my heavy enemy. And for my Lord Cecill, I thought he would never forsake me in extremity. I would not have done it him, God knows. But do not thou know it, for he must be master of thy child and may have compassion of him. Be not dismayed, that I die in despair of God's mereies. Strive not to dispute it. But assure thyself that God hath not left me, nor Satan tempted me. Hope and Despair live not together. I know it is forbidden to destroy ourselves ; but I trust it is forbidden in this sort—that we destroy not ourselves despairing of God's mercy. The mercy of God is immeasurable ; the cogitations of men comprehend it not.

In the Lord I have ever trusted ; and I know that my Redeemer liveth. Far it is from me to be tempted with Satan ; I am only tempted with Sorrow, whose sharp teeth devour my heart. O God ! Thou art goodness itself, Thou canst not but be good to me. O God ! that art mercy itself, Thou canst not but be merciful to me !

For my estate, (it) is conveyed to feoffees—to your cousin Brett and others. I have but a bare estate for a short life. My plate is at gage in Lombard Street ; my debts are many. To Peter Vanlore, some £600. To Antrobus as much, but Cumption is to pay £300 of it. To Michael Hext £100. To George Carew, £100. To Nicholas Sanders(on), £100. To

John Fitzjames, £100. To Master Waddon, £100. To a poor man, one Hawkes, for horses, £70. To a poor man, called Hunt, £20. Take first care of those, for God's sake. To a brewer at Weymouth and a baker for Lord Cecill's ship and mine, I think some £80. John Reynolds knoweth it. And let that poor man have his true part of my return from Virginia. And let the poor men's wages be paid with the goods, for the Lord's sake. Oh, what will my poor servants think, at their return, when they hear I am accused to be Spanish who sent them—at my great charge—to plant and discover upon his territory.

Oh, intolerable infamy! O God! I cannot resist these thoughts. I cannot live to think how I am derided, to think of the expectation of my enemies, the scorn I shall receive, the cruel words of lawyers, the infamous taunts and despites, to be made a wonder and a spectacle. O death! hasten thou unto me that thou mayest destroy the memory of these, and lay me up in dark forgetfulness. O Death! destroy my memory which is my tormentor; my thoughts and my life cannot dwell in one body. But do thou forget me poor wife, that thou mayest live to bring up my poor child.

I recommend unto you my poor brother A(drian) Gilbert. The lease of Sandridge is his, and none of mine. Let him have it for God's cause. He knows what is due to me upon it. And be good to Kemis, for he is a perfect honest man, and hath much wrong for my sake. For the rest, I commend me to them and them to God. And the Lord knows my sorrow to part from thee and my poor child. But part I must, by enemies and injuries; part with shame; and triumph of my detractors. And therefore be contented with this work of God, and forget me in all things, but thine own honour and the love of mine.

I bless my poor child, and let him know his father was no traitor. Be bold of my innocence, for God—to whom I offer life and soul—knows it. And whosoever thou choose again after me, let him be but thy politique husband. But let my son be thy beloved, for he is part of me, and I live in him; and the difference is but in the number and not in the kind. And the Lord for ever keep thee and them, and give thee comfort in both worlds.



SIR WALTER RALEGH TO SIR WALTER COPE

*[A plea that his wife might share his imprisonment]*

SIR WALTER COPE,—

October the 9, 1610.

You are of my old acquayntance, and were my familiar frind for many yeeres, in which time I hope you cannot say that ever I used any unkind office towards you. But our fortunes are now changed, and it may be in your power greatly to bynde me unto you, if the bynding of a man in my estate be worth anything. My desire unto you is, that you wilbe pleased to move my Lord Treasurer in my behalf, that by his grace my wife might agayne be made a prisoner with me, as she hath bine for six yeeres last past. Shee being now divided from me, and thereby, to my great impoverishing, I am driven to keip to<sup>1</sup> howses. A miserable fate it is, and yet great to me, who, in this wretched estate, can hope for no other thing than peacible sorrow. It is now, and I call the Lord of all power to wittnes yt. I ever have bine, and am resolved that it was never in the worthey hart of Sir Robert Cecyll (whatsoever a councler of State and a Lord Treasurer of England must do) to suffer me to fall, mich less to perrish. For what soever termes it hath pleased his Lordship to use towards mee, which might utterly dispaire any bodie else, yet I know that he spake them as a Councler, sitting in Councill, and in company of such as would not otherwise have bine satisfied.

But, as God liveth, I would have bought his presence att a farr deerer rate than those sharp words and these three moneths close imprissonment, for it is in his Lordship's face and countenance that I behold all that remaynes to me of comfort and all the hope I have, and from which I shall never be beaten till I see the last of evils and the dispayre which hath no healp. The blessings of God cannot make him cruell that was never so, nor prosperitie teach any man of so great worth to delight in the endless adversitie of an enemie, mich less of him who in his very sowle and nature can never be such a one towards him.

Sir, the matter is of no great importance (though a cruell destinie hath made it so to me) to desire that my wife may live with me in this unsavory place. If by your mediation I may obtayne it, I will acknowledg it in the highest degree of thankfullness; and rest reddey in trew fayth to be commanded by you.

W. RALEGH.

## SIR PHILIP SIDNEY

1554-1586

SIR PHILIP SIDNEY, 'the *beau idéal* of the courtier, soldier and scholar', as some one has described him, was one of the first of the Elizabethans to revolt against the tyranny of Lyly's Euphuism. Drayton, in his *Poets and Poesie*, in 1627, eulogizes him for having reduced

Our tongue from Lillie's writing then in use,  
Talking of Stones, Stars, Plants, of Fishes, Flies,  
Playing with words and idle Similes.

Sidney's lovable nature reveals itself in the following letter to his younger brother, Robert, who lived to become Viscount Lisle (1605) and first Earl of Leicester of a new creation (1618), his uncle, the other and better-known Earl of Leicester, having died in 1588, two years after commanding the expedition to the Low Countries, when Philip Sidney met his death. Robert Sidney was also present at the battle outside Zutphen, when his brother was mortally wounded. It was in 1580, the year in which the letter was written, that Sidney, having fallen into disfavour with Elizabeth through his condemnation of her proposed marriage with the Duke of Anjou, retired to Wilton, where he wrote most of his *Arcadia*—the first romance of its kind in English literature—merely for the amusement of his beloved sister, Lady Pembroke. Sidney's *Apologie for Poetrie* may be assigned to about the same date, though it was not printed until 1595, four years after the first, but unauthorized publication of his *Astrophel and Stella*. Long before any of these could appear the author himself, as already mentioned, had met his death heroically under the walls of Zutphen, during the wretched expedition in support of the Netherlands in their struggle against Spain. It is not difficult, from the tone of the last of his letters now reproduced, to realize how heavily he was handicapped in the thankless part which he had to play in that half-hearted campaign.

## SIR PHILIP SIDNEY TO HIS BROTHER

[*Brotherly advice in the Sixteenth Century*]

1580.

MY DEAR BROTHER,—

For the money you have received, assure yourself, (for it is true) there is nothing I spend so pleaseth me, as that which is for you. If ever I have ability you will find it; if not, yet shall not any other brother living be better beloved than you of me. I cannot write now to N. White, do you excuse me. For his nephew, they are but passions in my father which we must bear with reverence; but I am sorry he should return till he had the circuit of his travel, for you shall never have such a servant as he would prove; use your own discretion

therein. For your countenance I would for no cause have it diminished in Germany; in Italy your greatest expense must be upon worthy men, and not upon householding. Look to your diet (sweet Robin), and hold up your heart in courage and virtue; truly great part of my comfort is in you. I know not myself what I meant by bravery in you, so greatly you may see I condemn you; be careful of yourself, and I shall never have cares. I have written to Mr. Savell; I wish you kept still together, he is an excellent man; and there may, if you list, pass good exercise betwixt you and Mr. Nevyle, there is a great expectation of you both. For the method of writing history, Boden has written at large; you may read him, and gather out of many words some matter. This I think in haste; a story is either to be considered as a story or a treatise, which besides that, addeth many things for profit and ornament; as a story, it is nothing but a narration of things done, with the beginnings, causes, and appendencies thereof; in that kind your method must be to have *seriem temporum* very exactly, which the chronologies of Melancthon, Tarchagnora, Languet, and such other, will help you to. Then to consider . . . Xenophon to follow Thucidides, so doth Thucidides follow Herodotus, and Diodorus Siculus follow Xenophon: so generally do the Roman stories follow the Greek, and the particular stories of present monarchies follow the Roman. In that kind you have principally to note the examples of virtue or vice, with their good or evil successes; the establishments or ruins of great estates, with the causes, the time, and circumstances of the laws then writ of; the enttrings and endings of wars, and therein the stratagems against the enemy, and the disciplinc upon the soldier; and thus much as a very historiographer. Besides this, the historian makes himself a discourser for profit; and an orator, yea, a poet, sometimes for ornament. An orator, in making excellent orations *e re nata*, which are to be marked, but marked with the notes of rhetorical remembrances; a poet, in painting forth the effects, the motions, the whisperings of the people, which, though in disputation, one might say were true; yet who will mark them well, shall find them taste of a poetical vein, and in that kind are gallantly to be marked; for though perchance they were not so, yet it is enough they might be so. The last point which tends to teach profit, is

of a discourser, which name I give to whosoever speaks *non simpliciter de facto, sed de qualitatibus et circumstantiis facti* ; and that is it which makes me and many others, rather note much with our pen than with our mind, because we leave all these discourses to the confused trust of our memory, because they being not tied to the tenor of a question, as philosophers use sometimes places ; the divine, in telling his opinion and reasons in religion ; sometimes the lawyer, in showing the causes and benefits of law ; sometimes a natural philosopher, in setting down the causes of any strange thing which the story binds him to speak of ; but most commonly a moral philosopher, either in the ethic part, when he sets forth virtues or vices, and the natures of passions, or in the politic, when he doth (as often as doth) meddle sententiously with matters of estate. Again, sometimes he gives precepts of war, both offensive and defensive ; and so, lastly, not professing any art, as his matter leads him, he deals with all arts, which because it carrieth the life of a lively example, it is wonderful what light it gives to the arts themselves ; so as the great civilians help themselves with the discourses of the historians, so do soldiers, and even philosophers, and astronomers ; but that I wish herein is this, that when you read any such thing, you strait bring it to his head, not only of what art, but by your logical subdivisions, to the next member and parcel of the art. And so as in a table, be it witty words, of which Tacitus is full ; sentences, of which Livy ; or similitudes, whereof Plutarch ; strait to lay it up in the right place of his store-house, as either military, or more specially defensive military, or more particularly defensive by fortification, and so lay it up. So likewise in politic matters ; and such a little table you may easily make, wherewith I would have you ever join the historical part, which is only the example of some stratagem, or good counsel, or such like. This write I to you in great haste, of method without method, but with more leisure and study, (if I do not find some book that satisfies,) I will venture to write more largely of it unto you. Mr. Savile <sup>1</sup> will with ease help you to set down such a table of remembrance to yourself, and for your sake I perceive he will do much, and if ever I be able, I will deserve it of him ; one only thing, as it

<sup>1</sup> Queen Elizabeth's tutor in Greek and Mathematics.



comes into my mind, let me remember you of, that you consider wherein the historian excelleth, and that to note ; as Dion Nicæus, in searching the secrets of government ; Tacitus, in the pithy opening the venom of wickedness, and so of the rest. My time, exceedingly short, will suffer me to write no more leisurely ; Stephen can tell you who stands with me while I am writing. Now, dear brother, take delight likewise in the mathematical ; Mr. Savile is excellent in them : I think you understand the sphere ; if you do, I care little for any more astronomy in you. Arithmetic and geometry I would wish you well seen in, so as both in matter of number and measure, you might have a feeling and active judgment ; I would you did bear the mechanical instruments wherein the Dutch excel. I write this to you as one, that for myself have given over the delight in the world ; but wish to you as much, if not more, than to myself. So you can speak and write Latin, not barbarously, I never require great study in Ciceronianism, the chief abuse of Oxford, *qui dum verba sectantur, res ipsas negligunt*. My toyful books I will send, with God's help, by February, at which time you shall have your money : and for £200 a year assure yourself, if the estates of England remain, you shall not fail of it ; use it to your best profit. My lord of Leicester sends you £40 as I understand by Stephen ; and promiseth he will continue that stipend yearly at the least ; then that is above commons ; in any case write largely and diligently unto him, for in troth, I have good proof that he means to be every way good unto you ; the odd £30 shall come with the hundred, or else my father and I will jarl. Now, sweet brother, take a delight to keep and increase your music ; you will not believe what a want I find of it in my melancholy times. At horsemanship, when you exercise it, read *Crison Claudio*, and a book that is called *La Gloria del' Cavallo*, withal, that you may join the thorough contemplation of it with the exercise ; and so shall you profit more in a month than others in a year, and mark the biting, saddling, and curing of horses. I would, by the way, your worship would learn a better hand ; you write worse than I, and I write cvil enough. Once again, have a care of your diet, and consequently of your complexion ; remember *gratior est veniens in pulchro corpore virtus*. Now, sir, for news I refer myself to this bearer, he

can tell you how we look on our neighbour's fires, and nothing has happened notable at home, save only Drake's return, of which yet I know not the secret points ; but about the world he hath been, and rich he is returned. Portugal we say is lost ; and to conclude, my eyes are almost closed up, overwatched with tedious business. God bless you, sweet boy, and accomplish the joyful hope I conceive of you. Once again, commend to Mr. Nevyle, Mr. Savile, and honest Harry White, and bid him be merry. When you play at weapons, I would have you get thick caps and brasers, and play out your play lustily, for indeed, tricks and dalliances are nothing in earnest, for the time of the one and the other greatly differs ; and use as well the blow as the thrust ; it is good in itself, and besides exerciseth your breath and strength, and will make you a strong man at the tournay and barriers. First, in any case, practise the single sword, and then with the dagger ; let no day pass without an hour or two such exercise ; the rest study, or confer diligently, and so shall you come home to my comfort and credit. Lord ! how I have babbled ! Once again, farewell, dearest brother. Your most loving and careful brother.

At Leicester House, the 18th of October, 1580.

SIR PHILIP SIDNEY TO SIR FRANCIS WALSHINGHAM,—HIS  
FATHER-IN-LAW

[*Campaigning under difficulties*]

1586.

RIGHT HONOURABLE,—

I receive divers letters from you, full of the discomfort which I see, and am sorry to see, that you daily meet with at home ; and I think, such is the good will it pleaseth you to bear me, that my part of the trouble is something that troubles you. But, I beseech you, let it not. I had before cast my count of danger, want, and disgrace ; and, before God, sir, it is true in my heart, the love of the cause doth so far overbalance them all, that, with God's grace, they shall never make me weary of my resolution. If her Majesty were the fountain, I would fear, considering what I daily find, that we should wax dry ; but she is but a means whom God useth ;

and I know not whether I am deceived, but I am faithfully persuaded that if she should withdraw herself, other springs would rise to help this action ; for methinks, I see the great work indeed in hand against the abusers of the world, whercin it is no greater fault to have confidence in man's power, than it is too hastily to despair of God's work. I think a wise and constant man ought never to grieve while he doth play, as a man may say, his own part truly, though others be out ; but if himself leave his hold because other mariners will be idle, he will hardly forgive himself his own fault. For me, I cannot promise of my own course, because I know there is a higher power that must uphold me, or else I shall fall ; but certainly I trust I shall not by other men's wants be drawn from myself. Therefore, good sir, to whom for my particular I am more bound than to all men besides, be not troubled with my troubles, for I have seen the worst, in my judgment, beforehand, and worse than that cannot be.

If the Queen pay not her soldiers she must lose her garrisons. There is no doubt thercof. But no man living shall be able to say the fault is in me. What relief I can do them, I will. I will spare no danger if the occasion serves. I am sure no creature shall be able to lay justice to my charge ; and for further doubts, truly I stand not upon them. I have written by Adams to the Council plainly, and therefore let them determine.

It hath been a costly beginning unto me, this war, by reason I had nothing proportioned unto it ; my servants inexperienced, and myself every way unfurnished : but hereafter, if the war continue, I shall pass much better through with it. For Bergen-ap-Zoom, I delighted in it, I confess, because it was near the enemy ; but especially having a fair house in it, and an excellent air, I destined it for my wife ; but finding how you deal there, and that ill payment in my absence thence might bring forth some mischief, and considering how apt the Queen is to interpret everything to my disadvantage, I have resigned it to my Lord Willoughby, my very friend, and indeed a valiant and frank gentleman, and fit for that place ; therefore I pray you know that so much of my regality is fallen. I understand I am called very ambitious and proud at home, but certainly if they knew my heart they would not altogether so judge me.



I wrote to you a letter by Will, my Lord of Leicester's jesting player, enclosed in a letter to my wife, and I never had answer thereof. It contained something to my Lord of Leicester, and counsel that some way might be taken to stay my lady there. I since, divers times, have writ to know whether you had received them, but you never answered me that point. I since find that the knave delivered the letters to my Lady Leicester, but whether she sent them to you, or no, I know not, but earnestly desire to do, because I doubt there is more interpreted thereof. Mr. Erington is with me at Flushing, and therefore I think myself at the more rest, having a man of his reputation ; but I assure you, sir, in good earnest, I find Burlas another manner of man than he is taken for, or I expected. I would to God, Bourne had obtained his suit. He is earnest, but somewhat discomposed with the consideration of his estate. Turner is good for nothing, and worse for the sound of the sackbuts.

We shall have a sore war upon us this summer, wherein if appointment had been kept, and these disgraces forborne, which have greatly weakened us, we had been victorious. I can say no more at this time, but pray for your long and happy life. At Utrecht, this 24th of March, 1586.

Your humble son,

PHILIP SIDNEY.

I know not what to say to my wife's coming till you resolve better ; for, if you run a strange course, I may take such an one here as will not be fit for any one of the feminine gender. I pray you make much of Nicholas Grey. I have been vilely deceived for armours for horsemen ; if you could spare me any out of your armoury I will send them you back as soon as my own be finished. There was never so good a father found a more troublesome son. Send Sir William Pelham, good sir, and let him have clerk's place, for we need no clerks, and it is most necessary to have such an one in the council.

FRANCIS BACON

1561-1626

It was one of the ironies of fate that the man who helped to send to the scaffold both his own benefactor, Essex, and Sir Walter Raleigh, should

himself end his days in disgrace. Francis Bacon was drinking the cup of bitterness to its dregs when he sent the pitiful letter to James I, printed below. The letter was written a year and a half after Bacon had been sent to the Tower for taking bribes while filling the office of Lord Chancellor. James tempered the blow by ordering his release within a few days of his committal, and later in the year pardoned him, but never permitted him to return either to Parliament or the Court. 'For my name and memory', wrote Bacon in the will which he drew up towards the end of 1625—only a few months before his death at Highgate—'I leave it to men's charitable speeches and to foreign nations and the next ages'; and his faith in posterity was well founded, for Bacon has taken his place as one of the great architects of English literature and the grandest thinker of his age.

FRANCIS BACON TO JAMES I

[*Written in disgrace*]

1622.

TO THE KING,—

It may please your most excellent Majesty, in the midst of my misery, which is rather assuaged by remembrance than by hope, my chiefest worldly comfort is to think, that, since the time I had the first vote of the Commons House of Parliament for Commissioner of the Union, until the time that I was, by this last Parliament, chosen by both Houses for their messenger to your Majesty in the petition of religion (which two were my first and last services), I was evermore so happy as to have my poor services graciously accepted by your Majesty, and likewise not to have had any of them miscarry in my hands; neither of which points I can anywise take to myself, but ascribe the former to your Majesty's goodness, and the latter to your prudent directions, which I was ever careful to have and keep. For, as I have often said to your Majesty, I was towards you but as a bucket and cistern, to draw forth and conserve, whereas yourself was the fountain. Unto this comfort of nineteen years' prosperity, there succeeded a comfort even in my greatest adversity, somewhat of the same nature, which is that, in those offences wherewith I was charged, there was not any one that had special relation to your Majesty, or any your particular commandments. For as towards Almighty God there are offences against the first and second table, and yet all against God; so with the servants of kings, there are offences more immediate against the sovereign, although all offences against law are also against the king. Unto which comfort there is added this circumstance,

that as my faults were not against your Majesty, otherwise than as all faults are ; so my fall was not your Majesty's act, otherwise than as all acts of justice are yours. This I write not to insinuate with your Majesty, but as a most humble appeal to your Majesty's gracious remembrance, how honest and direct you have ever found me in your service, whereby I have an assured belief that there is in your Majesty's own princely thoughts a great deal of serenity and clearness towards me, your Majesty's now prostrate and cast-down servant.

Neither, my most gracious sovereign, do I, by this mention of my former services, lay claim to your princely graces and bounty, though the privilege of calamity doth bear that form of petition. I know well, had they been much more, they had been but by bounden duty : nay, I must also confess, that they were, from time to time, far above my merit, over and super-rewarded by your Majesty's benefits, which you heaped upon me. Your Majesty was and is that master to me that raised and advanced me nine times, thrice in dignity, and six times in offices. The places were indeed the painfulest of all your services ; but then they had both honour and profits ; and the then profits might have maintained my now honours, if I had been wise ; neither was your Majesty's immediate liberality wanting towards me in some gifts, if I may hold them. All this I do most thankfully acknowledge ; and do herewith conclude, that for anything arising from myself to move your eye of pity towards me, there is much more in my present misery than in my past services ; save that the same, your Majesty's goodness, that may give relief to the one, may give value to the other.

And indeed, if it may please your Majesty, this theme of my misery is so plentiful as it need not be coupled with anything else. I have been somebody by your Majesty's singular and undeserved favour, even the prime officer of your kingdom. Your Majesty's arm hath often been laid over mine in council when you presided at the table ; so near was I ! I have borne your Majesty's image in metal, much more in my heart. I was never, in nineteen years' service, chidden by your Majesty ; but, contrariwise, often overjoyed when your Majesty would sometimes say, I was a good husband for you, though none for myself ; sometimes, that I had a way to deal in business *fauvibus modis*, which was the way which was most

according to your own heart ; and other most gracious speeches of affection and trust, which I feed on to this day. But why should I speak of these things which are now vanished but only the better to express my downfall ?

For now it is thus with me : I am a year and a half old in misery ; though, I must ever acknowledge, not without some mixture of your Majesty's grace and mercy. For I do not think it possible that any one, whom you once loved, should be totally miserable. Mine own means, through my own improvidence, are poor and weak, little better than my father left me. The poor things that I have had from your Majesty are either in question or at courtesy. My dignities remain marks of your past favour, but burdens of my present fortune. The poor remnants which I had of my former fortunes, in plate or jewels, I have spread upon poor men unto whom I owed, scarce leaving myself a convenient subsistence ; so as to conclude, I must pour out my misery before your Majesty, so far as to say, *Si tu deferis, perimus*.

But as I can offer to your Majesty's compassion little arising from myself to move you, except it be my extreme misery, which I have truly opened ; so looking up to your Majesty's own self, I should think I committed Cain's fault if I should despair. Your Majesty is a king, whose heart is as inscrutable for secret motions of goodness as for depth of wisdom. You are, Creator-like, factive, not destructive ; you are the prince in whom hath ever been noted an aversion against anything that savoured of an hard heart ; as on the other side, your princely eye was wont to meet with any motion that was made on the relieving part. Therefore, as one that hath had the happiness to know your Majesty near-hand, I have, most gracious sovereign, faith enough for a miracle, and much more for a grace, that your Majesty will not suffer your poor creature to be utterly defaced, nor blot that name quite out of your book, upon which your sacred hand hath been so oft for the giving him new ornaments and additions.

Unto this degree of compassion, I hope God (of whose mercy towards me, both in my prosperity and adversity, I have had the great testimonies and pledges, though mine own manifold and wretched unthankfulness might have averted them) will dispose your princely heart, already prepared to all piety

you shall do for me. And as all commiserable persons (especially such as find their hearts void of all malice) are apt to think that all men pity them, so I assure myself that the lords of your council, who, out of their wisdom and nobleness, cannot but be sensible of human events, will, in this way which I go, for the relief of my estate, further and advance your Majesty's goodness towards me ; for there is, as I conceive, a kind of fraternity between great men that are, and those that have been, being but the several tenses of one verb. Nay, I do further presume, that both Houses of Parliament will love their justice the better if it end not in my ruin ; for I have been often told, by many of my lords, as it were in the way of excusing the severity of the sentence, that they knew they left me in good hands. And your Majesty knoweth well I have been all my life long acceptable to those assemblies ; not by flattery, but by moderation, and by honest expressing of a desire to have things go fairly and well.

But if it may please your Majesty (for saints I shall give them reverence, but no adoration ; my address is to your Majesty, the fountain of goodness), your Majesty shall, by the grace of God, not feel that in gift, which I shall extremely feel in help ; for my desires are moderate, and my courses measured to a life orderly and reserved, hoping still to do your Majesty honour in my way ; only I most humbly beseech your Majesty to give me leave to conclude with these words, which necessity speaketh. Help me, dear sovereign, lord and master, and pity so far, as that I, that have borne a bag, be not now in my age forced, in effect, to bear a wallet ; nor that I, that desire to live to study, may not be driven to study to live. I most humbly crave pardon of a long letter, after a long silence. God of heaven ever bless, preserve, and prosper your Majesty. Your Majesty's poor ancient servant and beadsman,

FR. BACON.

## WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

1564-1616

IN the absence of any known letter of Shakespeare outside his printed poems we are forced to fall back on the dedicatory epistles to the Earl of Southampton on the opening pages of *Venus and Adonis*, and *Lucrece*, published respectively in 1593 and 1594. It is Southampton, too, who is greeted in



the *Sonnets* as the poet's patron; for the Earl of Southampton enjoys the distinction of being the only patron of Shakespeare known to biographical research. According to Nicholas Rowe, Shakespeare's biographer of 1709, 'there is one instance so singular in its magnificence of this patron of Shakespeare's that if I had not been assured that the story was handed down by Sir William D'Avenant, who was probably very well acquainted with his affairs, I should not venture to have inserted; that my Lord Southampton at one time gave him a thousand pounds to enable him to go through a purchase which he heard he had a mind to. A bounty very great and very rare at any time'.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE, 'TO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE HENRY  
WRIOTHESLY, EARL OF SOUTHAMPTON AND BARON OF  
TITCHFIELD,

[*The dedication of 'Venus and Adonis'*]

RIGHT HONOURABLE,—

I know not how I shall offend in dedicating my unpolished lines to your lordship, nor how the world will censure me for choosing so strong a prop to support so weak a burden: only, if your honour seem but pleased, I account myself highly praised, and vow to take advantage of all idle hours, till I have honoured you with some graver labour. But if the first heir of my invention prove deformed, I shall be sorry it had so noble a godfather, and never after ear so barren a land, for fear it yield me still so bad a harvest. I leave it to your honourable survey, and your honour to your heart's content; which I wish may always answer your own wish and the world's hopeful expectation.

Your honour's in all duty,

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE, 'TO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE HENRY  
WRIOTHESLY, EARL OF SOUTHAMPTON AND BARON OF  
TITCHFIELD'

[*The dedication of 'Lucrece'*]

The love I dedicate to your Lordship is without end; whereof this pamphlet, without beginning, is but a superfluous moiety. The warrant I have of your honourable disposition, not the worth of my untutored lines, makes it assured of acceptance. What I have done is yours; what I have to do is yours; being part in all I have, devoted yours. Were my worth greater,

my duty would show greater ; meantime, as it is, it is bound to your Lordship, to whom I wish long life, still lengthened with happiness.

Your lordship's in all duty,  
WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE.

## JOHN DONNE

1573-1631

IZAACK WALTON'S life of Donne is a delightful but unreliable biography, and it was not until Mr. Edmund Gosse issued his *Life and Letters of John Donne* in 1899, in two volumes, that the full story of the learned dean's career could be read. The letters had been collected and revised by Mr. Gosse for the first time, and many of them, hitherto unpublished, throw a flood of light on a number of obscure points in Donne's biography. 'No man attends court fortunes with more impatience than I do', he exclaims in one of these letters to his brother-in-law—which, by the courtesy of Mr. Gosse and his publisher, Mr. Heinemann, we now reprint with the others in the series—and in truth Donne had reasons to be impatient, for he had passed his fortieth birthday without reaping any reward for his services. The letters to Rochester, written in the preceding year, show that the infamous favourite of James I had taken the poet and friend of Ben Jonson, as he then was, into his service, even to the extent of 'buying' him, the correspondence making it clear that Rochester turned to Donne with the promise of patronage if he would help him as an advocate for the nullity of the first marriage of his mistress, the unscrupulous Countess of Essex. The humiliating part played by Donne in this moustroous intrigue is difficult to excuse ; but, as Mr. Gosse remarks, 'poverty and anxiety dragged his beautiful nature down into the dust'. Fortunately, 'a complete relief was now coming, and a startling change in the order and tenor of his being'. This was when Donne at length began his career as a divine. He lived to become the greatest preacher of the seventeenth century. It was James I who persuaded him to take holy orders—on the occasion when Rochester, now become Earl of Rochester and 'my Lord Chamberlain', summoned him to Newmarket to secure an appointment at Court. 'I know Mr. Donne is a learned man, has the abilities of a learned divine, and will prove a powerful preacher', said James, 'and my desire is to prefer him in that way, and in that way I will deny him nothing'. Donne's letter to his father-in-law on returning from Newmarket to prepare himself for ordination, shows Donne—to quote Mr. Gosse's comment on the letter which he prints for the first time in his work—'turning towards a new patron in his new profession'. My Lord of Canterbury at that time was George Abbot, a righteous man, and no friend of Somerset or his minions. 'It is more than probable', says Mr. Gosse, 'that Abbot, who was very well informed, was aware, as Donne feared that he might be, of Donne's activity for Somerset in the business of the nullity . . . and I have a suspicion that it was the opposition of the Archbishop which delayed Donne in rising to those dignities in the Church which his talents and the favour of two monarchs would naturally have demanded'.



JOHN DONNE, 'A V MERCED' <sup>1</sup>—EVIDENTLY TO SIR HENRY  
GOODYER.

[*Seven years after his runaway marriage*]

1608.

SIR,—

I write not to you out of my poor library, where to cast mine eye upon good authors kindles or refreshes sometimes meditations not unfit to communicate to near friends; nor from the high way, where I am contracted, and inverted into myself; which are my two ordinary forges of letters to you. But I write from the fire-side in my parlour, and in the noise of three gamesome children; and by the side of her,<sup>2</sup> whom because I have transplanted into a wretched fortune, I must labour to disguise that from her by all such honest devices, as giving her my company and discourse; therefore I steal from her all the time which I give this letter, and it is therefore that I take so short a list, and gallop so fast over it. I have not been out of my house since I received your packet.

As I have much quenched my senses, and disused my body from pleasure, and so tried how I can endure to be mine own grave, so I try now how I can suffer a prison. And since it is but to build one wall more about our soul, she is still in her own centre, how many circumferences soever fortune or our own perverseness cast about her. I would I could as well entreat her to go out, as she knows whither to go. But if I melt into a melancholy whilst I write, I shall be taken in the manner: and I sit by one too tender towards these impressions, and it is so much our duty, to avoid all occasions of giving them sad apprehensions, as St. Hierome accuses Adam of no other fault in eating the apple, but that he did it, *Ne contristaretur delicias suas*. . . .

Your servant and lover,

J. DONNE.

<sup>1</sup> A *Vuestra Merced*, 'to your worship', a playful use—as Mr. Edmund Gosse says in printing the letter in full—of the Spanish salutation.

<sup>2</sup> A touching allusion to his wife, who was a daughter of Sir George More and niece of Lord Ellesmere. Their clandestine marriage was the cause of many of Donne's latter perplexities, and had the immediate result of removing him from his post as secretary to Lord Ellesmere. In his letter communicating the intelligence of this dismissal to his wife he subscribed himself 'John Donne, Ann Donne, Un-Done'. His wife did not live to enjoy the years of his prosperity, for she died—after bearing him twelve children in seventeen years—just when his tide of fortune had taken the turn.

JOHN DONNE, 'TO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE THE LORD VIS-  
COUNT OF ROCHESTER'

[*Bought by Rochester*]

1612.

MY MOST HONOURABLE GOOD LORD,—

After I was grown to be your Lordship's by all the titles that I could think upon, it hath pleased your Lordship to make another title to me, by buying me. You may have many better bargains in your purchases, but never a better title than to me, nor anything which you may call yours more absolutely and entirely than me. If therefore I appear before your Lordship sometimes in these letters of thankfulness, it may be an excusable boldness, because they are part of your evidences by which you hold me. I know there may be degrees of importunity even in thankfulness; but your Lordship is got above the dangers of suffering that from me, or my letters, both because my thankfulness cannot reach to the benefits already received, and because the favour of receiving my letters is a new benefit. And since good divines have made this argument against deniers of the Resurrection, that it is easier for God to unite the principles and elements of our bodies, howsoever they be scattered, than it was at first to create them of nothing, I cannot doubt but that any distractions or diversions in the ways of my hopes will be easier to your Lordship to reunite than it was to create them. Especially since you are already so near perfecting them, that if it agreed with your Lordship's purposes, I should never wish other station than such as might make me still, and only your Lordship's most humble and devoted servant,

J. DONNE.

JOHN DONNE TO SIR G. MORE, HIS FATHER-IN-LAW

[*The Lord Chamberlain and the Lord of Canterbury*]

December 3, 1614.

SIR,—

I returned not till yesternight from my expensive journey, where I have received from the King as good allowance and encouragement to pursue my purpose as I could desire. Whilst I was there I found that my Lord Chamberlain refused to

swear a gentleman into the place as Groom of the Chamber, after he had bargained for it, because he was a servant to my Lord of Canterbury. This and some other lights make me see that matters stand not so well between them, but that they are likely to oppose one another's dependants. Before I go about to seek my Lord of Canterbury, I would gladly, if I could, discern his inclination to me, and whether he have any conjecture upon my relation to my Lord Chamberlain, which he is very likely to have come to his knowledge since my going, by reason of his Lordship's more open avowing me than heretofore. If, therefore, you have taken any occasion to speak with his Grace since I desired that favour with you, and have perceived anything thereby which you think fit I should know before your coming hither, I humbly beseech you to let me understand it, when any servant of yours hath occasion to come to London, that I may use my best means of disposing him towards it.

My Lord Chamberlain hath laid his commandment upon the Master of Requests to forbear to move the King in the other business, for any man; though I saw the bill for the King's hand, and saw it was still earnestly pursued out of York House. His Lordship hath assured me that it shall sleep till I move him to set it afoot hereafter, when my son or any for me may have profit thereby, with which purpose I will acquaint my Lord Chancellor, and humbly entreat him that it may be so. And so, sir, with my humble duty to you and your poor daughters, I leave you to our most blessed Saviour.

Your ever to be commanded,

J. DONNE.

At my poor house,  
December 3, 1614.

JOHN DONNE TO SIR H[ENRY] G[OODYER]

*[Ingratitude for Past Favours]*

March, 1615.

SIR,—

I have destined all this Tuesday for the Court, because it is both a Sermon day, and the first day of the King's being here. Before I was to go forth, I had made up the enclosed packet for you, and then came this message with your packet,

of which, if you can remember the number, you cannot expect any account thereof from me, who have not half-an-hour left me before I go forth, and your messenger speaks of a necessity of returning homeward before my returning home. If upon the delivery of them, or any other occasion, there intervene new subject of writing, I shall relieve myself upon Tuesday, if Tamworth carrier be in town. To the particulars of the letter to myself, I will give this paper and line.

Of my Lady Bedford, I must say so much as must importune you to burn the letter; for I would say nothing of her upon record, that should not testify my thankfulness for all her graces. But upon this motion, which I made to her by letter, and by Sir Thomas Roe's assistance, if any scruple should arise in her, she was somewhat more startling than I looked for from her; she had more suspicion of my calling, a better memory of my past life, than I had thought her nobility could have admitted; of all which, though I humbly thank God, I can make good use, as one that needs as many remembrances in that kind, as not only friends but enemies can present, yet I am afraid they proceed in her rather from some ill impression taken from Dr. Burges, than that they grow in herself. But whosoever be the conduit, the water is the Holy Ghost's, and in that acception I take it. For her other way of expressing her favour to me, I must say, it is not with that cheerfulness as heretofore she hath delivered herself towards me. I am almost sorry that an elegy should have been able to move her to so much compassion heretofore, as to offer to pay my debts; and my greater wants now, and for so good a purpose, as to come disengaged into that profession, being plainly laid open to her, should work no farther but that she sent me £30, which in good faith she excused with that, which is in both parts true, that her present debts were burdensome, and that I could not doubt of her inclination, upon all future emergent occasions, to assist me. I confess to you, her former fashion towards me had given a better confidence; and this diminution in her makes me see, that I must use more friends than I thought I should have needed.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This ingratitude for Lady Bedford's generous treatment of him in the past is unworthy of Donne. Her excuses in the present case for giving him only £30 towards his debts—though £30 was a considerable sum in those days—we know to be genuine, for she was then engaged in a costly law suit which had been brought against her mother.

I would you could burn this letter before you read it ; at least do when you have read it. For, I am afraid out of a contemplation of mine own unworthiness, and fortune, that the example of this Lady should work upon the Lady where you are ; for though goodness be originally in her, and she do good for the deed's sake, yet, perchance, she may think it a little wisdom to make such measure of me, as they who know no better do.

Of any new treaty of a match with Spain, I hear nothing. The wars in the Low Countries to judge by their present state, are very likely to go forward. No word of a Parliament, and I myself have heard words of the King as directly against any such purpose, as any can sound. I never heard word, till in your letter, of any stirs in Scotland, for that of the French King which you ask, it hath this good ground, that in the Assembly there is a proposition hath been made, and well entertained, that the King should be declared to have full jurisdiction in France ; and no other person to have any. It hath much of the model and frame of our Oath of Allegiance, but with some modification. It is true, it goes farther than that State hath drove in any public declarations, but not farther than their schools have drove often and constantly ; the easiness that it hath found in passing thus far without opposition, puts (perchance unnecessarily) in me a doubt, that they are sure to choke it, at the Royal assent, and therefore oppose it not, by the way, to sweeten the conveyance of their other purposes. Sir, if I stay longer I shall lose the text, at Court, therefore I kiss your hand, and rest,

Your very true servant,

J. DONNE.

We hear (but without second as yet) that Sir Richard Philip's brother in France hath taken the habit of a Capuchin.

JOHN DONNE, ' TO SIR ROBERT KER WITH MY BOOK *Biathanatos*  
AT MY GOING INTO GERMANY '

April, 1619.

[*His confidential work on suicide*]

SIR,—

I had need do somewhat towards you above my promises ; how weak are my performances when even my promises a-c



defective? I cannot promise, no, not in mine own hopes, equally to your merit towards me. But besides the poems, of which you took a promise, I send you another book to which there belongs this history. It was written by me many years since, and because it is upon a misinterpretable subject, I have always gone so near suppressing it, as that it is only not burnt; no hand hath passed upon it to copy it, nor many eyes to read it; only to some particular friends in both universities then when I writ it, I did communicate it. And I remember I had this answer, that certainly there was a false thread in it, but not easily found. Keep it, I pray, with the same jealousy; let any that your discretion admits to the sight of it know the date of it, and that it is a book written by Jack Donne, and not by Dr. Donne. Reserve it for me if I live, and if I die I only forbid it the press and the fire; publish it not, but yet burn it not, and between those do what you will with it.<sup>1</sup> Love me still thus far for your own sake, that when you withdraw your love from me you will find so many unworthinesses in me as you grow ashamed of having had so long, and so much, such a thing as—Your poor servant in Christ Jesus.

J. DONNE.

JOHN DONNE 'TO THE MOST HONOURABLE AND MY MOST  
HONOURED LORD, THE MARQUESS OF BUCKINGHAM'

[*His favourite authors*]

MOST HONOURED LORD,—

I can thus far make myself believe that I am where your Lordship is, in Spain, that, in my poor library, where indeed I am, I can turn mine eye towards no shelf, in any profession from the mistress of my youth, Poetry, to the wife of mine age, Divinity, but that I meet more authors of that nation than of any other.<sup>2</sup> Their authors in Divinity, though they

<sup>1</sup> 'With that highly characteristic desire to preserve all his finished writings', says Mr. Gosse, 'although he would not be persuaded to publish them, Donne circulated among his most intimate friends copies both of his *Poems* and of his still more confidential *Biathanatos*'. This was the work in which Donne admitted a conditional right of suicide. It was first printed thirteen years after his death.

<sup>2</sup> 'It is curious to see Donne turning resolutely away from the literature of his native country, which we know he condemned, while expending his full attention on that of Spain. He stands in a singular position therefore; he is an Englishman of the late Elizabethan and early Jacobean age, wholly indifferent to Shakespeare, but eager to read the elegies of Herrera, perfectly languid in the presence of Bacon, but an ardent admirer of Luis de Granada and Jorge de Montemôr'.—*Edmund Gosse*.



do not show us the best way to heaven, yet they think they do. And so though they say not true, yet they do not lie, because they speak their conscience.

And since in charity I believe so of them for their divinity, in civility I believe it too for civil matters that therein also they mean as they say, and by this time your Lordship knows what they say. I take therefore this boldness, and congratulate thus with your Lordship the great honour which you receive in being so great an instrument of that work in which the peace of Christendom so much consists.<sup>1</sup> How to use a sword when it is out we know you know. Think you that Commandment of our Saviour to be directed upon you: 'Put up the sword, study the ways of peace.' The hardest authors in the world are kings. And your Lordship hath read over the hardest of them. Since you have passed from the text of the King of kings, the Book of God, by the commentary of the wisest King among men, the counsels of our Sovereign, the knowledge of other states and other kings, is downhill, and obvious to your Lordship, and you find it in posting. And for this blessed clearness in your Lordship, Almighty God receives every day, not the prayers (their time is not when the thing is given already) but the thanks of your Lordship's humblest and devotedst and thankfulest servant in Christ Jesus.

J. DONNE.

JOHN DONNE ' TO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE SIR THOMAS ROE,  
AMBASSADOR FOR HIS MAJESTY OF GREAT BRITAIN TO  
THE GRAND SEIGNIOR '2 .

*[On his Methods as a Preacher and other matters]*

*December 1, 1622.*

If your Lordship's chaplain be as well shipped as my letter is shipped in him, they come both well to your Lordship. Mine is but a vessel for another weather, for now when I begin to write, I remember a commandment which my Lord of Carlisle laid upon me, to call for a letter from him, upon

<sup>1</sup> Buckingham was at this time in Spain with the Prince of Wales in the matter of the marriage with the Infanta.

<sup>2</sup> Printed by Mr. Gosse for the first time from the *State Papers, Domestic; James I.*

your first commodity of sending ; and before this letter be sealed, I hope he will return from Court. If he do not, I may have leave to say something, both of that which he would and that which he would not have said in his own letter. He would not have said that which I may, that he is the directest man that ever I knew, but he would have said that he is as much directed upon you as any, for, in good faith, he apprehends everywhere any occasion of testifying well of your Lordship. To speak in that language which you know to be mine, that is free in will (at least) from flattery, he provides for his ease and his thrift in doing so ; for, truly, I have met no case anywhere, where the delivering of a good opinion of you, or a judgment upon any of your actions, costs any man anything, or exercises him against an opposition. Our Blessed Saviour give you the comfort of it all your way, and your reward of it at last.

Many grains make up the bread that feed us, and many thorns make up the crown that must glorify us, and one of the thorns is, for the most part, the stinging calumny of others' tongues. This (for anything that concerns the public) you had not in your last employment, though then you had a domestic Satan, a viper, a tongue-stinger, in your own house. In this employment you have been every way delivered from it ; I never heard your private nor public actions calumniated, so you have the less thorns to make up that crown. But, sir, since that crown is made of thorns, be not without them. When you contemplate Christ Jesus crowned with thorns, remember that those thorns which you see stand out hurt Him not ; those which wounded Him were bent inward. Outward thorns of calumny and misinterpretation do us least harm ; innocency despises them, or friends and just examiners of the case blunt or break them. Find thorns within ; a wounding sense of sin bring you the thorns, and Christ will make it a crown ; or do you make it a crown, when two ends meet and make a circle (consider yourself, from one mother to another, from the womb to the grave), and Christ will make it a crown of glory. Add not you to my thorns by giving any ill interpretations of my silence or slackness in writing ; you, who have so long accustomed to assist me with your good opinion and testimonies and benefits, will not easily do that ; but if you have at any time declined towards it, I beseech

you let this have some weight towards re-rectifying you, that the assiduity of doing the Church of God that service which (in a poor measure) I am thought to be able to do, possesses me, and fills me.

You know, sir, that the astronomers of the world are not so much exercised about all the constellations and their motions formerly apprehended and believed, as when there arises a new and irregular meteor. Many of them this treaty of the marriage of the Prince hath produced in our firmament, in our divinity, and many men, measuring public actions with private affections, have been scandalised, and have admitted suspicions of a tepidness in very high places. Some Civil Acts, in favour of the Papists, have been with some precipitation over-dangerously misapplied too. It is true there is a major proposition, but the conclusion is too soon made, if there be not a minor too. I know to be sorry for some things that are done (it is sorry that our times are overtaken with a necessity to do them) proceeds of true zeal, but to conclude the worst upon the first degree of ill is a distilling with too hot a fire. One of these occurrences gave the occasion to this sermon, which by commandment I preached, and which I send your Lordship. Some weeks after that I preached another at the same place, upon the Gunpowder Day; therein I was left more to mine own liberty, and therefore I would I could also send your Lordship a copy of that, but that one, which also by commandment I did write, after the preaching, is as yet in his Majesty's hand, and I know not whether he will in it, as he did in the other, after his reading thereof, command it to be printed; and whilst it is in that suspense I know your Lordship would call it indiscretion to send out any copy thereof; neither truly am I able to commit that fault, for I have no copy.

A few days after I preached, by invitation of the Virginian Company, to an honourable auditory, and they recompensed me with a new commandment in their service to print that, and that, I hope, comes with this, for with papers of that kind I am the apter to charge your chaplain. In the exercise of my ministry I have assisted in the time of sickness, and now attended at the funerals, the first night of my Lady Jacob, and the next of Sir Wm. Killigrew, among whom the Bishop of Exeter, my predecessor here, had commenced a suit in

Chancery of (as he laid it in his bill) £30,000 value. The case grew to a strange point. That which was laid to him was indirect dealing in the execution of a commission about the value of that land which was taken from the bishopric. His sickness made him unable to answer; without it they could not proceed. There was proposed a way, to appoint him a guardian *ad hoc*; but the defect being not in his understanding, some of the judges said, that if the case were treason, and he by the hand of God become unable to answer, he could not be proceeded against. Whilst they were in further deliberation the good man is dead, and the charge being personal of which no other man can give an account, I hope the whole business is dead too; though, if it be pursued, I do not discern that they are in any danger. I recommend myself to your Lordship's prayers, and I enwrap you with mine own soul in mine; and our Blessed God enwrap in the righteousness of His Son both you and

Your Lordship's humblest and thankfulest servant in Christ Jesus,

J. DONNE.

At my poor house at St. Paul's, London.

## FRANCIS BEAUMONT

1584-1616

FRANCIS BEAUMONT's famous letter in verse to Ben Jonson was probably written from Grace Dieu, the family seat in Leicestershire, to which he occasionally retired from the exuberant life of London, sometimes, it is evident, taking with him his bosom friend and collaborator, John Fletcher. The convivial meetings at the *Mermaid* had been instituted years previously by Sir Walter Raleigh, and were vastly enjoyed not only by Jonson and Beaumont and Fletcher, but by the great Shakespeare himself, Donne, and many other literary lions of their day. Well might Beaumont exclaim—'What things have we heard done at the *Mermaid*!' It is possible that Jonson was the means of first bringing Beaumont and Fletcher together here, but in any case they must have known each other quite early, for this literary partnership began somewhere about the year 1606, when Beaumont was twenty-two and Fletcher six years older. The partnership lasted only about ten years, but it yielded no fewer than fifty-two plays, to say nothing of a masque, and some minor poems.

## MASTER FRANCIS BEAUMONT'S LETTER TO BEN JONSON

[*Written before he and Master Fletcher came to London, with two of the precedent comedies, then not finished, which deferred their merry meetings at the Mermaid*']

The sun (which doth the greatest comfort bring  
 To absent friends, because the selfsame thing  
 They know, they see, however absent) is  
 Here our best hay-maker (forgive me this ;  
 It is our country's style) : in this warm shine  
 I lie, and dream of your full Mermaid wine.  
 Oh, we have water mixed with claret lees,  
 Drink apt to bring in drier heresies  
 Than beer, good only for the sonnet's strain,  
 With fustian metaphors to stuff the brain ;  
 So mixed that, given to the thirstiest one,  
 'Twill not prove alms, unless he have the stone :  
 I think with one draught man's invention fades,  
 Two cups had quite spoiled Homer's *Iliads* ;  
 'Tis liquor that will find out Sutcliffe's wit :  
 Lie where he will, and make him write worse yet :  
 Filled with such moisture, in most grievous qualms,  
 Did Robert Wisdom write his singing psalms ;  
 And so must I do this ; and yet I think  
 It is a potion sent us down to drink  
 By special Providence, keeps us from fights,  
 Make us not laugh when we make legs to knights ;  
 'Tis this that keeps our minds fit for our states,  
 A medicine to obey our magistrates ;  
 For we do live more free than you ; no hate,  
 No envy at one another's happy state,  
 Moves us : we are all equal every whit :  
 Of land, that God gives men here is their wit,  
 If we consider fully ; for our best  
 And gravest man will with his main house-jest  
 Scarce please you ; we want subtilty to do  
 The city tricks, lie, hate, and flatter too ;  
 Here are none that can bear a painted show,  
 Strike when you wincc, and then lament the blow :  
 Who, like mills set the right way for to grind,  
 Can make their grain alike with every wind ;



Only some fellows, with the subtlest pate  
Amongst us, may perchance equivocate  
At selling of a horse, and that's the most ;  
Methinks the little wit I had is lost  
Since I saw you ; for wit is like a rest  
Held up at tennis, which men do the best  
With the best gamesters. What things have we seen  
Done at the *Mermaid* ! heard words that have been  
So nimble, and so full of subtle flame,  
As if that every one from whence they came  
Had meant to put his whole wit in a jest,  
And had resolved to live a fool the rest  
Of his dull life ; then where there hath been thrown  
Wit able enough to justify the town  
For three days past : wit that might warrant be  
For the whole city to talk foolishly,  
Till that were cancelled ; and when that was gone,  
We left an air behind us, which alone  
Was able to make the next two companies  
Right witty ; though but downright fools, more wise :  
When I remember this, and see that now  
The country gentlemen begin to allow  
My wit for dry bobs, then I needs must cry,  
I see my days of ballating grow nigh ;  
I can already riddle, and can sing  
Catches, sell bargains, and I fear shall bring  
Myself to speak the hardest word I find  
Over as oft as any, with one wind  
That takes no medicines. But one thought of thee  
Makes me remember all these things to be  
The wit of our young men, fellows that shew  
No part of good, yet utter all they know ;  
Who, like trees of the gard, have growing souls.  
Only strong Destiny, which all controls,  
I hope hath left a better fate in store  
For me, thy friend, than to live ever poor,  
Banished unto this home. Fate once again  
Bring me to thee, who canst make smooth and plain  
The way of knowledge for me, and then I,  
Who have no good but in thy company,  
Protest it will my greatest comfort be

To acknowledge all I have to flow from thee.  
 Ben, when these scenes are perfect, we'll taste wine ;  
 I'll drink thy Muse's health, thou shalt quaff mine.

## BEN JONSON

1573-1637

BEN JONSON was in his palmy days when Beaumont wrote his verse-letter to him from the country, and he could appreciate them to the full after the vicissitudes through which he had passed since he left the Army in Flanders, and first took to acting and playwriting. Only two years before receiving Beaumont's verses he was suffering imprisonment—as will be seen from the first of his letters now reproduced—seemingly because of reflections on someone in a play written by Chapman and himself. Beyond that fact, little is known in connexion with the incident, for it was his temporary imprisonment earlier in the same year that brought his mother on the scene with a 'lusty strong poison' for him—in case of necessity. This was after Chapman and Marston had been thrown into prison for the reflections on the Scots contained in *Eastward Ho*, Jonson, who also contributed to the play, having voluntarily joined them there. According to Jonson's account to Drummond 'the report was that they should then have had their ears cut and noses. After their delivery he banqueted all his friends ; there were Camden, Selden, and others ; at the midst of the feast his old mother drank to him, and showed him a paper which she had (if the sentence had taken execution) to have mixed in the prison among his drink, which was full of lusty strong poison, and that she was no churl, she told, she intended first to have drunk of it herself'. This was not the first time that Jonson had narrowly escaped death in prison, for in 1598, having killed a brother actor in a duel, or brawl, he was convicted of felonious homicide and was only saved by benefit of clergy. The letter to Drummond dated May 10, 1619, was written by Jonson on his return from the memorable visit to that Scottish poet, whose well known *Notes* of his visitor's conversation (first printed in 1842) forms one of the most interesting chapters of literary history. Jonson, writes William Gifford, had left Drummond at Hawthornden, 'with a heart overflowing with respect and gratitude, while his host, with a hand yet warm from the pressure of affection, retired to his closet, and having thanked God that he was not a "drunkard", a "dissembler", a "braggard", as other men were, or even one "that interpreted best deeds and sayings to the worst", like this Jonson, sat complacently down to destroy his character (as he hoped) for ever'.

Mr. Symonds, in his study of Ben Jonson in the 'English Worthies' series, while acknowledging 'that thin thread of bitter feeling', takes a more lenient view of Drummond's attitude. 'It would be absurd, as Gifford and others have done', he writes, 'to detect ill-feeling and deliberate malice in a series of useful jottings, drawn up with the obvious intention of preserving a great man's sayings, and with no view to their publication'. It was not until 1842 that the conversations were first printed *in extenso*.

Our last letters of Ben Jonson belong to the later and unhappier years of his life. Palsy and dropsy both had then their hold upon him, and he was no longer fashionable as a poet. The Duke of Newcastle was one of his most generous supporters, and Jonson's letters to him are characteristic of the humble and grateful tone which he adopted in all his correspondence with his patrons.

BEN JONSON 'TO THE MOST NOBLY VIRTUOUS AND THRICE-HONOURED EARL OF SALISBURY'

[*An Appeal from Prison*]

1605.

MOST TRULY HONOURABLE,—

It hath still been the tyranny of my fortune so to oppress my endeavours that before I can shew myself grateful in the least for former benefits, I am enforced to provoke your bounties for more. May it not seem grievous to your Lordship, that now my innocence calls upon you (next the Deity) to her defence. God himself is not averted at just men's cries; and you that approach that divine goodness and supply it here on earth in your places and honours, cannot employ your aid more worthily than to the common succour of honesty and virtue, how humbly soever it be placed.

I am here, my most honoured Lord, unexamined and unheard, committed to a vile prison, and with me a gentleman, (whose name, may, perhaps, have come to your Lordship) one Mr. George Chapman, a learned and honest man. The cause (would I could name some worthier, though I wish we had known none worthy our imprisonment) is (the words irk me that our fortune hath necessitated us to so despised a course) a play, my lord; whereof we hope there is no man can justly complain that hath the virtue to think but favourably of himself, if our judge bring an equal ear; marry, if with prejudice we be made guilty afore our time, we must embrace the asinine virtue, patience. My noble lord, they deal not charitably who are witty in another man's works, and utter sometimes their own malicious meanings under our words. I protest to your honour, and call God to testimony (since my first error,<sup>1</sup> which, yet, is punished in me more with my shame than it was then with my bondage) I have so attempted

<sup>1</sup> His share in *Eastward Ho*, the comedy which, earlier in the same year, led to his temporary imprisonment for its reflections on the Scots.

my style, that I have given no cause to any good man of grief ; and if to any ill, by touching at any general vice, it hath always been with a regard and sparing of particular persons. I may be otherwise reported ; but if all that be accused, should be presently guilty, there are few men would stand in the state of innocence.

I beseech your most honourable Lordship, suffer not other men's errors or faults past to be made my crimes ; but let me be examined both by all my works past and this present ; and not trust to rumour but my books (for she is an unjust deliverer both of great and of small actions) whether I have ever (many things I have written private or public) given offence to a nation, to a public order or state, or any person of honour or authority ; but have equally laboured to keep their dignity as my own person safe. If others have transgressed, let me not be entitled to their follies. But lest in being too diligent for my excuse, I may incur the suspicion of being guilty, I become a most humble suitor to your Lordship that with the honourable Lord Chamberlain<sup>1</sup> (to whom I have in like manner petitioned) you will be pleased to be the grateful means of our coming to answer ; or, if in your wisdom it shall be thought necessary, that your Lordship will be the most honoured cause of our liberty, where freeing us from one prison you will remove us to another ; which is eternally to bind us and our muses to the thankful honouring of you and yours to posterity, as your own virtues have by any descents of ancestors ennobled you to time.

Your honour's

Most devoted in heart as words,

BEN JONSON.

BEN JONSON, 'TO MY WORTHY, HONOURED, AND BELOVED  
FRIEND, MR. W. DRUMMOND'

[*On his return from Hawthornden*]

London : May 10, 1619.

Most loving and beloved sir, against which titles I should most knowingly offend, if I made you not at length some account of myself, to come even with your friendship. I am

<sup>1</sup> Thomas, Earl of Suffolk.

arrived safely, with a most catholic welcome, and my reports not unacceptable to his Majesty. He professed (I thank God) some joy to see me, and is pleased to hear of the purpose of my book,<sup>1</sup> to which I most earnestly solicit you for your promise of the inscriptions at Pinky, some things concerning the Loch of Lomond, touching the Government of Edinburgh, to urge Mr. James Scot, and what else you can procure for me with all speed (especially I make it my request that you will enquire for me whether the Students' method at St. Andrews be the same with that at Edinburgh, and so to assure me, or wherein they differ). Though these requests be full of trouble, I hope they shall neither burden nor weary such a friendship, whose commands to me, I will even interpret a pleasure. News we have none here, but what is making against the Queen's funeral, whereof I have somewhat in hand which shall look upon you with the next. Salute the beloved Fentons, the Nisbets, the Scots, the Levingstons, and all the honest and honoured names with you, especially Mr. James Writh, his wife, your sister, etc. And if you forget yourself, you believe not in

Your most true friend and lover,

BEN JONSON.

#### BEN JONSON TO JOHN DONNE

*[In reply to a letter beseeching him to abstain from justifying himself against some false charge]*

SIR,—

You cannot but believe how dear and reverend your friendship is to me (though all testimony on my part hath been too short to express me), and therefore would I meet it with all obedience. My mind is not yet so deafened by injuries, but it hath an ear for counsel. Yet in this point that you presently dissuade, I wonder how I am misunderstood; or that you should call that an imaginary right, which is the proper justice that every clear man owes to his innocency. Exasperations I intend none, for truth cannot be sharp but to ill natures, or such weak ones whom the ill spirits, suspicion or credulity still possess. My lady<sup>2</sup> may believe whisperings,

<sup>1</sup> His prose work, *The Discoveries*.

<sup>2</sup> Probably Lucy, Countess of Bedford, a great patroness of the poets of her day. See p. 41.



receive tales, suspect and condemn my honesty, and I may not answer, on the pain of losing her ! as if she, who had this prejudice of me were not already lost !—O no, she will do me no hurt, she will think and speak well of my faeulties.—She cannot there judge me ; or if she could, I would exchange all glory (if I had all men's abilities), which could come that way, for honest simplicity. But there is a great penalty threatened, the loss of you, my true friend ; for others I reckon not, who were never had. You have so subscribed yourself. Alas ! how easy is a man accused that is forsaken of defence !—Well, my modesty shall sit down, and (let the world call it guilt or what it will) I will yet thank you that counsel me to a silence in these oppressures, when confidence in my right, and friends may abandon me. And lest yourself may undergo some hazard, for my questioned reputation, and draw jealousies or hatred upon you, I desire to be left to mine own innocence, which shall acquit me, or heaven shall be guilty.

Your ever true lover,  
BEN JONSON.

BEN JONSON TO THE EARL OF NEWCASTLE

[*His Lordship's timely gratuity*]

No date.

MY NOBLE LORD AND MY BEST PATRON,—

I have done the business your Lordship trusted me with ; and the morning after I received by my beloved friend, Master Payne, your Lordship's timely gratuity <sup>1</sup>—I style it such, for it fell like the dew of heaven on my necessities—I pray to God my work may have deserved it ; I meant it should in the working it, and I have hope the performance will conclude it. In the meantime I tell your Lordship what I seriously think—God sends you these chargeable and magnificent honours of making feasts, to mix with your charitable succours, dropt upon me your servant ; who have nothing to claim of merit but a cheerful undertaking whatsoever your Lordship's judgment thinks me able to perform. I am in the number of your humblest servants, my Lord, and the most willing ; and do

<sup>1</sup> Probably for 'Love's Welcome at Welbeck', performed at the Duke of Newcastle's entertainment to King Charles in 1533.

joy in the good friendship and fellowship of my learned friend, Master Payne, than whom your Lordship could not have employed a more diligent and judicious man, or that hath treated me with more humanity ; which makes me cheerfully to insert myself into your Lordship's commands, and so sure a clientèle.

Wholly and only your Lordship's,  
BEN JONSON.

BEN JONSON TO THE EARL OF NEWCASTLE

[*A straightforward begging letter*]

No date.

MY NOBLEST LORD AND BEST PATRON,—

I send no borrowing epistle to provoke your Lordship, for I have neither fortune to repay, nor security to engage, that will be taken : but I make a most humble petition to your Lordship's bounty to succour my present necessities this good time (festival) of Easter, and it shall conclude all begging requests hereafter on the behalf

Of your truest beadsman and most thankful servant,

B. J.



## *PART II*

### The Age of Milton and Dryden

ROBERT HERRICK—JOHN SUCKLING—EDMUND WALLER—  
BISHOP HALL—JAMES HOWELL—SIR THOMAS BROWNE  
—JOHN MILTON—ANDREW MARVELL—THE DUCHESS OF  
NEWCASTLE—IZAACK WALTON—SAMUEL PEPYS—JOHN  
EVELYN—ABRAHAM COWLEY—JOHN LOCKE—JOHN  
DRYDEN—WILLIAM CONGREVE





## ROBERT HERRICK

1591-1674

ROBERT HERRICK was born while Ben Jonson was fighting in Flanders, and died in the same year as Milton. He was apprenticed to his uncle, Sir Robert Herrick, or Herick, a prosperous Cheapside goldsmith and money-lender, who went on a mission from Elizabeth to the Grand Turk ten years before the poet's birth. Robert's father was also a well-to-do Cheapside goldsmith, but he died when the poet was still in his infancy, and the uncle appears to have acted the part of a not over-generous guardian. At all events, the only letters of Herrick that have come down to us are those written to his uncle while he was a fellow-commoner at St. John's College, Cambridge—and all are tuned to the same plaintive key. The last of the series is addressed from Trinity Hall, whither the poet seems to have migrated for reasons of economy. On returning to London, Herrick came to know Jonson and his merry men, and in one of his lyrics shows that the *Mermaid* was by no mean the only tavern frequented by the genial Ben :

Ah Ben  
Say how, or when  
Shall we thy guests  
Meet at those lyric feasts,  
Made at the *Sun*,  
The *Dog*, the *Triple Tun* ?  
Where we such clusters had  
As made us nobly wild, not mad ;  
And yet each verse of thine  
Outdid the meat, outdid the frolic wine.

In 1629 Herrick took orders and found himself banished to Dean Prior, a lonely living on the edge of Dartmoor. Here, as Mr. Laurie Magnus remarks in *How to Read English Literature*, he amused his cultivated leisure with dull epigrams or luscious lyrics, contained in his collection called *Hesperides*, and expressed in his divine poems, or *Noble Numbers*, the verse-recreations of a vicar.

### ROBERT HERRICK TO SIR WILLIAM HERRICK

[*The Importunate Scholar*]

Are the minds of men immutable ? and will they rest in only one opinion without the least perspicuous shew of change ? O no, they cannot, for *Tempora mutantur et nos mutamur in illis* : it is an old but yet young saying in our age, as times

change, so men's minds are altered. O would . . . were seen, for then some pitying Planet would with a drop of dew refresh my withered hopes, and give a life to that which is about to die ; the body is preserved by food, and life by hope, which (but wanting either of these conservers) faint, fear, fall, freeze, and die. 'Tis in your power to cure all, to infuse by a profusion a double life into a single body. *Homo homini Deus* : man should be so, and he is commanded so ; but, frail and glass-like, man proves brittle in many things. How kind Arcisilaus the philosopher was unto Apelles the painter Plutarch in his *Morals* will tell you ; which should I here depaint, the length of my letter would hide the sight of my Labour, which that it may not, I bridle in my Quill and mildly, and yet I fear too rashly and too boldly make known and discover which my modesty would conceal ; and this is all : my study craves but your assistance to furnish her with books, wherein she is most desirous to labour : blame not her modest boldness, but suffer the aspersions of your love to distil upon her, and next to Heaven she will consecrate her labours unto you, and because that Time hath devoured some years, I am the more importunate in the craving ; suffer not the distance to hinder that which I know your disposition will not deny. And now is the time (that *florida ætas*) which promises fruitfulness for her former barrenness, and wisheth all to hope. As every thing will have in time an end, so this, which though it would extend itself and overflow its bounds I forcibly withstand it. Wishing this world's happiness to follow and attend you in this life, and that with a triumphant crown of glory you may be crowned in the best world to come.

ROBERT HERRICK.

## SIR JOHN SUCKLING

1609-1642

JOHN SUCKLING's letter 'to a nobleman', which has been described as a perfect specimen of finished courtliness, appears to have been written while the poet was serving in Germany under Gustavus Adolphus. On returning to England about 1632, he at once became 'the darling of the Court', D'Avenant describing him as the greatest gallant and gamester

of his day. Most of the songs and ballads on which his fame now rests were written at this period. The second letter was dispatched during his inglorious march with Charles I to Scotland in the summer of 1639, when he followed the king with a troop of 100 horse, bringing ridicule upon his head for the gorgeous clothes with which he dedecked his soldiers. His fine feathers—said to have cost him £12,000—did not make fine soldiers, for his contingent fared no better than the Royal troops in the shameful rout before the Scots at Duns. Three years later Suckling fled to the Continent in consequence of the discovery of his schemes to set on foot the ‘first army plot’, and, according to Aubrey, he committed suicide in Paris.

## SIR JOHN SUCKLING TO A NOBLEMAN

[‘*A perfect Specimen of finished Courtliness*’]

MY NOBLE LORD,

Your humble servant had the honour to receive from your hand a letter, and had the grace upon the sight of it to blush ; I but then found my own negligence, and but now have the opportunity to ask pardon for it. We have ever since been upon a march, and the places we have come to, have afforded rather blood than ink ; and of all things, sheets have been the hardest to come by, especially those of paper. If these few lines shall have the happiness to kiss your hand, they can assure you, that he who sent them knows no one to whom he owes more obligation than to your Lordship, and to whom he would more willingly pay it ; and that it must be no less than necessity itself that can hinder him from often presenting it. Germany hath no whit altered me ; I am still the humble servant of my lord that I was ; and when I cease to be so, I must cease to be

JOHN SUCKLING.

## SIR JOHN SUCKLING TO —

[*The Inglorious March to Scotland*]

June, 1639.

SIR,—

We are at length arrived at that river about the uneven running of which my friend Master William Shakespear makes Henry Hotspur quarrel so highly with his fellow-rebels, and for his sake I have been something curious to consider the scantlet of ground that angry monsieur would have had in,

but cannot find it could deserve his choler, nor any of the other side ours, did not the king think it did. The account I shall now give you of the war will be but imperfect, since I conceive it to be in the state that part of the four and twenty hours is, in which we can neither call it night nor day. I should judge it dawning towards earnest, did not the Lords Covenanters' letters to our Lords here something divide me. So, sir, you may now imagine us walking up and down the banks of the Tweed like the Tower lions in their cages, leaving the people to think what we would do if we were let loose. The enemy is not yet much visible. It may be it is the fault of the climate, which brings men as slowly forward as plants; but it gives us fears that the men of peace will draw all this to a dumbshow, and so destroy a handsome opportunity, which was now offered, of producing glorious matter for future chronicle.

These are but conjectures, sir. The last part of my letter I reserve for a great and known truth, which is, that I am, sir, your most humble servant, J. S.

#### EDMUND WALLER

1606-1687

THE first two letters of Waller are interesting for their connexion with 'Sacharissa', the lady whom, as Aubrey says, 'he has eternized in his poems'. Sacharissa—a name derived by the poet 'as he used to say pleasantly', from *Sacharum*, sugar—was Lady Dorothy Sidney, the eldest daughter of Robert, second Earl of Leicester, and she seems to have had no lack of suiters for her hand, apart from Edmund Waller. The Sacharissa episode came to an end on July 20, 1639, when the Earl of Leicester's daughter was married at Penshurst to Lord Spencer of Wormleighton, afterwards Earl of Sunderland. Waller's letter on the subject to the bride's sister is a curious specimen of the polite letter-writing which prevailed in the days of Charles the First. His courtly letter on his lady's 'handkercher' is somewhat confusing on account of its reference to a 'Mistress Vane,' though the letter is addressed on the outside 'for my Ladye Dorothye Sidney'. Various explanations of this have been given, but the probability is either that Lady Dorothy chose to be known as 'Mistress Vane' to her admirer, or that it was by the hand of one Mistress Vane that the handkerchief came into the poet's possession. 'It can hardly be', writes the editor of Waller's Poems (G. Thorn Drury) in the Muses' Library, 'that he was writing his "acknowledgment" to Sacharissa, and promising her "æternally to keep" the handkerchief of "another Kentish young lady, a member of the Vane family," as Mrs. Ady [in her *Sacharissa*, 1893] supposes him to have been'.

EDMUND WALLER TO 'MY LADYE DOROTHEE SIDNEY'

[A 'Sacharissa' episode]

May, 1639.

MADAM,—

The handkercher I receaved from Mistress Vane having so neer resemblance to a dream, which presents us with a mixture of things that have no affinitye one with another, I have (as the Assirian kings did with their dreams) consulted with all the magicians and cunning woemen in our countrie, and though it be easie to see through it, I finde none that can enterpret it; I am sending it to Oxford to the Astrologers to know if there be any constellations or fygures in the upper Globe to which those in the 4 corners may allude, for on Earth the Herball tells us of nothing like them: I did first apprehend it was as a potent charme, having power like the wand of Cyrce, to transforme me into some strange shape<sup>1</sup>; but the crosses in the middle perswading mee it was a good Christian handkercher I ventured to wipe my face with it, when the golden fringe with a rough salute told me it was for some nobler use: Madam, I beseech your Ladyship use your interest in hir to unriddle this handkercher which so perplexes us. I am sorrie that a Ladie of so various a phansye hath not the power of framing living things too, that wee might behold some new compositions and kindes of things which dull nature never thought of: seriously (Madam) I humbly kiss hir hands for this favor, which not being to be wasted by use, I shall æternally keepe for hir sake, and doe presume shee will pardon this rambling acknowledgement made in imitation of the style of hir handkercher; by (Madam)

Your Ladyship's most humble servant,

EDM. WALLER.

EDMUND WALLER TO LADY LUCY, THE SISTER OF THE BRIDE

[On the occasion of the wedding of Sacharissa]

July, 1639.

MADAM,—

In this common joy at Penshurst I know none to whom complaints may come less unseasonable than to your Lady-

<sup>1</sup> Following this came some words which have been obliterated—apparently 'if I but touched my nose with it'.



ship, the loss of a bed-fellow being almost equal to that of a mistress ; and therefore you ought, at least to pardon, if you consent not to the imprecations of the deserted, which just Heaven no doubt will hear. May my Lady Dorothy, if we may yet call her so, suffer as much, and have the like passion for this young Lord, whom she has preferred to the rest of mankind, as others have had for her ; and may this love, before the year goes about, make her taste of the first curse imposed on womankind, the pains of becoming a mother. May her first born be none of her own sex, nor so like her ; but that he may resemble her Lord as much as herself. May she that always affected silence and retiredness, have the house filled with the noise and number of her children, and hereafter of her grandchildren, and then may she arrive at that great curse so much declined by fair ladies, old age : may she live to be very old, and yet seem young, be told so by her glass, and have no aches to inform her of the truth : and when she shall appear to be mortal, may her Lord not mourn for her, but go hand in hand with her to that place where we are told there is neither marrying nor giving in marriage, that being there divorced we may all have an equal interest in her again. My revenge being immortal, I wish all this may also befall their posterity to the world's end, and afterwards.

To you, Madam, I wish all good things, and that this loss may in good time be happily supplied with a more constant bed-fellow of the opposite sex. Madam, I humbly kiss your hand, and beg pardon for this trouble, from

Your Ladyship's most humble servant,

E. WALLER.

#### BISHOP HALL

1574-1656

JOSEPH HALL, writes Robert A. Willmott in printing the following letter among his *Letters of Eminent Persons* (1839), 'was not justified in calling himself the first English satirist, for he had been preceded by Lodge in 1593 ; but he introduced a precision, a force, and a harmony, of which few previous examples had been given. His claim, however, to the earliest publication of Epistles in our language cannot be disputed. "Further," he says in the Dedication to Prince Henry, "which these times account not the least praise, your grace shall herein perceive a new fashion of discourse by Epistles ; new to our language ; usual to all others : and so as novelty is never without plea of use, more free, more familiar. Thus we

do but talk with our friends by our pen, and express ourselves no whit less easily ; somewhat more digestedly.” The Latin Letters of Ascham do not of course interfere with the bishop’s priority. Lord Denny, afterwards Earl of Norwich, was the bountiful patron to whom Hall was indebted for the living of Waltham, where he passed more than twenty years of his laborious and Christian life’.

#### BISHOP HALL TO LORD DENNY

*[How he spends his days]*

EVERY day is a little life ; and our whole life is but a day repeated ; whence it is that old Jacob numbers his life by days ; and Moses desires to be taught this point of holy arithmetic, to number not his years, but his days. Those, therefore, that dare lose a day, are dangerously prodigal ; those that dare misspend it, desperate. We can best teach others by ourselves : let me tell your lordship how I would pass my days, whether common or sacred ; that you (or who-soever others overhearing me) may either approve my thriftiness, or correct my errors ; to whom is the account of my hours either more due, or more known ? All days are His who gave time a beginning and continuance ; yet some He hath made ours ; not to command, but to use. In none may we forget Him ; in some we must forget all, besides Him. First, therefore, I desire to awake at those hours, not when I will, but when I must ; pleasure is not a fit rule for rest, but health, neither do I consult so much with the sun, as mine own necessity, whether of body, or in that of the mind. If this vassal could well serve me waking, it should never sleep ; but now it must be pleased, that it may be serviceable. Now, when sleep is rather driven away than leaves me, I would ever awake with God ; my first thoughts are for Him, who hath made the night for rest, and the day for travail ; and as He gives, so blesses both. If my heart be early seasoned with His presence, it will savour of Him all day after. While my body is dressing, not with an effeminate curiosity, nor yet with rude neglect, my mind addresses itself to her ensuing task, bethinking what is to be done, and in what order, and marshall-ing (as it may) my hours with my work ; that done, after some while meditation, I walk up to my masters and companions, my books ; and sitting down amongst them, with the best contentment, I dare not reach forth my hand to salute

any of them, till I have first looked up to heaven, and craved favour of Him to whom all my studies are duly referred ; without whom I can neither profit nor labour. After this, out of no over great variety, I call forth those which may best fit my occasions ; wherein I am not scrupulous of age. Sometimes I put myself to school to one of those ancients, whom the Church hath honoured with the name of fathers ; whose volumes I confess not to open, without a sacred reverence of their holiness and gravity ; sometimes to those later doctors, which want nothing but age to make them classical : always to God's Book. That day is lost whereof some hours are not improved in those Divine Monuments : others, I turn over out of choice ; these, out of duty. Ere I can have sate unto weariness, my family, having now overcome all household distractions, invites me to our common devotions, not without some short preparation. These, heartily performed, send me up with a more strong and cheerful appetite to my former work, which I find made easy to me by intermission and variety. Now, therefore, can I deceive the hours with change of pleasures, that is, of labours. One while, mine eyes are busied ; another while my hand ; and sometimes my mind takes the burden from them both ; wherein I would imitate the skilfullest cooks, which make the best dishes with manifold mixtures. One hour is spent in textual divinity, another in controversy : histories relieve them both. Now, when the mind is weary of other labours, it begins to undertake her own ; sometimes it meditates and winds up for future use ; sometimes it lays forth her conceits into present discourse ; sometimes for itself, oftner for others. Neither know I whether it works or plays in these thoughts ; I am sure no sport hath more pleasure, no work more use ; only the decay of a weak body makes me think these delights insensibly laborious. Thus could I all day (as ringers use) make myself music with changes, and complain sooner of the day for shortness, than of the business for toil ; were it not that this faint monitor interrupts me still in the midst of my busy pleasures, and enforces me both to respite and repast. I must yield to both ; while my body and mind are joined together in unequal couples, the better must follow the weaker. Before my meals, therefore, and after, I let myself loose from all thoughts ; and now, would forget that I ever studied : a full mind takes away the

body's appetite, no less than a full body makes a dull and unwieldy mind ; company, discourse, recreations, are now seasonable and welcome ; these prepare me for a diet, not gluttonous, but medicinal ; the palate may not be pleased, but the stomach ; nor that for its own sake : neither would I think any of these comforts worth respect in themselves, but in their use, in their end ; so far as they may enable me to better things. If I see any dish to tempt my palate, I fear a serpent in that apple, and would please myself in a wilful denial ; I rise capable of more, not desirous ; not now immediately from my trencher to my book ; but after some intermission. Moderate speed is a sure help to all proceedings ; where those things which are prosecuted with violence of endeavour, or desires, either succeed not, or continue not.

After my latter meal my thoughts are slight : only my memory may be charged with her task of recalling what was committed to her custody in the day ; and my heart is busy in examining my hands and mouth, and all other senses, of that day's behaviour. And, now the evening is come, no tradesman doth more carefully take in his wares, clear his shop-board, and shut his windows, than I would shut up my thoughts, and clear my mind. That student shall live miserably which, like a camel, lies down under his burden. All this done, calling together my family, we end the day with God. Thus do we rather drive the time before us, than follow it. I grant neither is my practice worthy to be exemplary, neither are our callings proportionable. The lives of a nobleman, of a courtier, of a scholar, of a citizen, of a countryman, differ no less than their dispositions ; yet must all conspire in honest labour.

Sweet is the destiny of all trades, whether of the brows, or of the mind ; God never allowed any man to do nothing. How miserable is the condition of those men, which spend the time as if it were given them, and not lent ; as if hours were waste creatures, and such as never should be accounted for ; as if God would take this for a good bill of reckoning : '*Item*, spent upon my pleasures forty years !' These men shall once find that no blood can privilege idleness, and that nothing is more precious to God than that which they desire to cast away—time. Such are my common days ; but God's day calls for another respect. The same sun arises on this day, and enlightens it ; yet, because that Sun of Righteousness arose

upon it, and gave a new life unto the world in it, and drew the strength of God's moral precept unto it, therefore justly do we sing with the Psalmist,—This is the day which the Lord hath made. Now, I forget the world, and in a sort myself ; and deal with my wonted thoughts, as great men use, who at some times of their privacy forbid the access of all suitors. Prayer, meditation, reading, hearing, preaching, singing, good conference, are the businesses of this day, which I dare not bestow on any work, or pleasure, but heavenly.

I hate superstition on the one side, and looseness on the other ; but I find it hard to offend in too much devotion ; easy in profaneness. The whole week is sanctified by this day ; and, according to my care of this, is my blessing on the rest. I show your lordship what I would do, and what I ought ; I commit my desires to the imitation of the weak ; my actions, to the censures of the wise and holy ; my weaknesses, to the pardon and redress of my merciful God.

### JAMES HOWELL

1594 ?–1666

JAMES HOWELL is another of the founders of epistolary literature, his fame resting on his *Epistolæ Hœclianæ : Familiar Letters*. These letters were written for the most part from the Fleet Prison, in which the author was a Royalist prisoner from 1643 to 1651, and were generally addressed to imaginary correspondents. Altogether, Howell wrote upwards of forty miscellaneous works, and, as Professor Edward Arber says, he furnishes one of the earliest instances of a man successfully maintaining himself with the fruits of his pen.

JAMES HOWELL TO SIR J. S—— AT LEEDS CASTLE

[*On letters and letter writing*]

Westminster : *July 25, 1625.*

SIR,—

It was a quaint difference the ancients did put betwixt a letter and an oration ; that the one should be attired like a woman, the other like a man : the latter of the two is allowed large side robes, as long periods, parentheses, similes, examples, and other parts of rhetorical flourishes ; but a letter or epistle should be short-coated and closely couched ; a hungerlin becomes a letter more handsomely than a gown ; indeed we



should write as we speak ; and that's a true familiar letter which expresseth one's mind, as if he were discoursing with the party to whom he writes, in succinet and short terms. The tongue and the pen are both of them interpreters of the mind ; but I hold the pen to be the more faithful of the two. The tongue *in udo posita*, being seated in a moist slippery place, may fail and falter in her sudden extemporal expressions ; but the pen having a greater advantage of premeditation, is not so subject to error, and leaves things behind it upon firm and authentic record. Now letters, though they be capable of any subject, yet commonly they are either narratory, objurgatory, consolatory, monitory, or congratulatory. The first consists of relations, the second of reprehensions, the third of comfort, the two last of counsel and joy ; there are some who in lieu of letters write homilies ; they preach when they should epistolize ; there are others that turn them to tedious tractates : this is to make letters degenerate from their true nature. Some modern authors there are who have exposed their letters to the world, but most of them, I mean among your Latin epistolizers, go freighted with mere Bartholomew ware, with trite and trivial phrases only, lifted with pedantic shreds of school-boy verses. Others there are among our next transmarine neighbours eastward, who write in their own language, but their style is so soft and easy, that their letters may be said to be like bodies of loose flesh without sinews, they have neither joints of art nor arteries in them ; they have a kind of simpering and lank hectic expressions, made up of a bombast of words and finical affected compliments only. I cannot well away with such fleazy stuff, with such cobweb-compositions, where there is no strength of matter, nothing for the reader to carry away with him that may enlarge the notions of his soul. One shall hardly find an apophthegm, example, simile, or any thing of philosophy, history, or solid knowledge, or as much as one new created phrase in a hundred of them ; and to draw any observations out of them, were as if one went about to distil cream out of froth ; insomuch that it may be said of them, what was said of the Echo, ' that she's a mere sound and nothing else '.

I return you your Balzac by this bearer : and when I found those letters wherein he is so familiar with his King, so flat ; and those to Richelieu so puffed with prophane hyperboles,

and larded up and down with such gross flatteries, I forbore him further.

So I am your most affectionate servitor.

JAMES HOWELL 'TO MY LORD CLIFFORD'

[*Edinburgh experiences*]

Edenburgh, 1639.

MY LORD,—

I have seen now all the King of Great Britain's dominions, and he is a good traveller that hath seen all his dominions. I was born in Wales, I have been in all the four corners of England, I have traversed the diameter of France more than once, and now I am come through Ireland into this kingdom of Scotland. This town of Edenburgh is one of the fairest streets I ever saw (excepting that of Palermo in Sicily). It is about a mile long, coming sloping down from the Castle (called of old the Castle of Virgins, and by Pliny, *Castrum alatum*) to Holyrood House, now the Royal Palace; and these two begin and terminate the town. I am come hither in a very convenient time, for here's a National Assembly and a Parliament, my Lord Traquair being his Majestie's Commissioner. The bishops are all gone to wrack, and they have had but a sorry funeral, the very name is grown so contemptible that a black dog, if he hath any white marks about him, is called bishop. Our Lord of Canterbury is grown here so odious, that they call him commonly in the pulpit, the priest of Bail, and the son of Belial.

I'll tell your lordship of a passage which happen'd lately in my lodging, which is a tavern. I had sent for a shoemaker to make me a pair of boots, and my landlord, who is a pert, smart man, brought up a chopin of white wine (and for this particular, ther are better French wines here than in England, and cheaper, for they are but at a groat a quart, and it is a crime of high nature to mingle or sophisticat any wine here). Over this chopin of white wine my vintner and shoemaker fell into a hot dispute about bishops. The shoemaker grew very furious, and called them the firebrands of hell, the panders of the whore of Babylon, and the instrument of the devil, and that they were of his institution, not of God's. My vintner took him up smartly and said, Hold, neighbour,

there. Do you know as well as I, that Titus and Timothy were bishops ? that our Saviour is entitled, the Bishop of our souls ? that the word bishop is as frequently mentioned in Scripture as the name pastor, elder, or deacon ? Then why do you inveigh so bitterly against them ? The shoo-maker answered, I know the name and office to be good, but they have abused it. My vintner replies, Well then you are a shoo-maker by your profession ; imagine that you, or a hundred, or a thousand, or a hundred thousand of your trade, should play the knaves, and sell calfskin leather boots for neats' leather, or do other cheats, must we therefore go bare-foot ? Must the gentle craft of shoo-makers fall therefore to the ground ? It is the fault of the men, not of the calling. The shoo-maker was so gravell'd at this, that he was put to his last, for he had not a word more to say, so my vintner got the day.

Ther is a fair Parliament House built here lately, and 'twas hoped his Majestie would have com hither to set in person ; and they did ill who advised him otherwise.

I am to go hence shortly baek to Dublin, and so to London, wher I hope to find your lordship, that, according to my accustomed boldness, I may attend you. In the interim I rest your lordship's most humble servitor,

J. H.

JAMES HOWELL TO MR. E. P.

*[Giving the original story of The Pied Piper of Hamelin]*

Fleet, October 1, 1643.

SIR,—

I saw such prodigious things daily don these few yeers, that I had resolv'd with my self to give over wondering at any thing ; yet a passage happen'd this week, that fore'd me to wonder once more, because it is without parallell. It was, that som odd fellows went skulking up and down London streets, and with figs and reasons allur'd little children, and so pourloyn'd them away from their parents, and carried them a ship-board far beyond sea, wher, by cutting their hair, and other divises, they so disguis'd them, that their parents could not know them.

This made me think upon that miraculous passage in Hamelen, a town in Germany, which I hop'd to have pass'd through when I was in Hamburg, had we return'd by Holland; which was thus (nor would I relate it unto you, were not there som ground of truth for it). The said town of Hamelen was annoyed with rats and mice; and it chanc'd that a pied-coated piper came thither, who covenanted with the chief burgers for such a reward, if he could free them quite from the said vermin, nor would he demand it, till a twelve-month and a day after: The agreement being made, he began to play on his pipes, and all the rats, and the mice, followed him to a great lough hard by, where they all perish'd; so the town was infested no more. At the end of the yeer, the pied piper return'd for his reward, the burgers put him off with slightings, and neglect, offring him som small matter, which he refusing, and staying some daycs in the town, one Sunday morning at high-masse, when most people were at church, he fell to play on his pipes, and all the children up and down, follow'd him out of the town, to a great hill not far off, which rent in two, and open'd, and let him and the children in, and so closed up again: this happen'd a matter of two hundred and fifty years since [A.D. 1643-250=1393 A.D.]; and in that town, they date their bills and bonds, and other instruments in law, to this day from the yeer of the going out of their children: besides, ther is a great pillar of stone at the foot of the said hill, whereon this story is engraven.

No more now, for this is enough in conscience for one time: So I am your most affectionate servitor,

J. H.

## SIR THOMAS BROWNE

1605-1682

SIR THOMAS BROWNE's letters to his son were written from Norwich, where he published his first and greatest work, the *Religio Medici*, in 1643, though it had been written at Shipden Hall, near Halifax, on his return from his travels about eight years earlier, when he was still a 'miracle of thirty years'. It was at Norwich that he wrote the *Urn Burial* and most of his other works, though many of them were not published until after his death. It was in the same cathedral city that Charles II, four years after the date of the first of the following letters, conferred the honour of knighthood on 'that deserving physician, Dr. Thomas Browne'. A story

is told to the effect that the Merry Monarch visited Browne in his own house 'in order to witness the desecution of a dolphin', and, as a writer in the *Times* Literary Supplement remarked in an admirable essay on Browne in connexion with the centenary celebrations in 1905, 'to any one familiar with Browne's long years of minute and patient and impassioned investigation of every obscure problem and legend in what natural history the seventeenth century could muster, there is nothing so unlikely in the presence of a dead dolphin in the good town of Norwich'. This love of natural history is noticeable in Browne's letters to his eldest son, Dr. Edward Browne, who lived to become physician to the King and president of the Royal College of Surgeons. Thomas Browne, the second son, was sent to travel alone in France at the age of fourteen. Four years later he joined the navy, and his loss, after a brief but brilliant career, was a heavy blow to his father.

SIR THOMAS BROWNE TO HIS SON LIEUTENANT THOMAS  
BROWNE

[*Words of Advice*]

[About *February*, 1667.]

I receaved yours, and would not deferre to send unto you before you sayled, which I hope will come vnto you; for in this wind, neither can Reare-admirall Kempthorne come to you, nor you beginne your voyage. I am glad you like Lucan so well. I wish more military men could read him; in this passage you mention, there are noble straynes; and such as may well affect generous minds. Butt I hope you are more taken with the verses then the subject, and rather embrace the expression then the example. And this I rather hint unto you, because the like, though in another waye, is sometimes practised in the King's shippes, when in desperate cases, they blowe up the same.<sup>1</sup> For though I know you are sober and consideratine, yet knowing you also to be of great resolution; and having also heard from ocular testimonies with what vndaunted and persevering courage you have demeaned yourself in great difficulties; and knowing your captaine to bee a stout and resolute man; and with all the cordiall friendshippe that is between you; I cannot omitt my earnest prayers vnto God to deliver you from such a temptation. Hee that goes to warre must patiently submitt vnto the various accidents thereof. To bee made prisoner by an

<sup>1</sup> In the action of the 3rd of June, 1666, Albemarle, the Commander-in-chief, confessed his intention rather to blow up his ship, and perish gloriously, than yield to the enemy.—Simon Wilkin, in his edition of the *Works of Sir Thomas Browne*, 1836.



vnequall and overruling power, after a due resistance, is no disparagement; butt after a carelesse surprizall or faynt opposition; and you have so good a memorie that you cannot forgett many examples thereof, even of the worthiest commanders in your beloved Plutark. God hath given you a stout, butt a generous and mereifull heart withall; and in all your life you could never behold any person in miserie butt with compassion and relief; which had been notable in you from a child: so have you layd up a good foundation for God's merey; and if such a disaster should happen, Hee will, without doubt, mercifully remember you. Howeuer, let God who brought you in the world in his owne good time, lead you through it; and in his owne season bring you out of it; and without such wayes as are displeasing vnto him. When you are at Cales, see if you can get a box of the Jesuits' powder at easier rate, and bring it in the bark, not in powder. I am glad you have receaued the bill of exchange for Cales; if you should find oecasion to make vse thereof. Enquire farther at Tangier of the minerall water you told mee, which was neere the towne, and whereof made use. Take notice of such plants as you meet with, either upon the Spanish or African coast; and if you knowe them not, putt some leaves into a booke, though carelessly, and not with that neatnesse as in your booke at Norwih. Enquire after any one who hath been at Fez; and learne what you can of the present state of that place, which hath been so famous in the description of Leo and others. The mereifull providence of God go with you. *Impellant animæ lintea Thraciæ.*

Your loving father,  
THOMAS BROWNE.

For Mr. Thomas Browne, Lieutenant of his Majestie's shippe, the *Marie Rose*, riding in Plimouth Sound.

SIR THOMAS BROWNE TO HIS SON, LIEUTENANT THOMAS BROWNE, THE MARIE ROSE, AT PORTSMOUTH

[*A Father's Praise*]

[*May or June, 1667.*]

DEAR SONNE,—

I am very glad you are returned from the strayghts mouth once more in health and safetie. God continue his mereifull

providence over you. I hope you maintaine a thankful heart and daylie bless him for your great deliverances in so many fights and dangers of the sea, whereto you have been exposed upon several seas, and in all seasons of the ycare. . . . And although you be not forward in commending yourself, yett others have not been backward to do it for you, and have so earnestly expressed your courage, valour, and resolution ; your sober, studious, and observing cours of life ; your generous and obliging disposition and the notable knowledge you have obtayned in military and all kind of sea affayres, that it affordeth no small comfort unto mee. And I would by no means omitt to declare the same unto yourself, that you may not want that encouragement which you so well deserve.

They that do well need not commend themselves ; others will be readie to do it for them. And because you may understand how well I have heard of you, I would not omitt to communicate this unto you. Mr. Scudamore, your sober and learned chaplaine, in your voyage with Sir Jeremie Smith, gives you no small commendations for a sober, studious, courageous, and diligent person ; that he had not met with any of the fleet like you, so civill, observing, and diligent to your charge, with the reputation and love of all the shippe ; and that without doubt you would make a famous man, and a reputation to your country. Captain Fenne, a meeke rough seaman, sayd that if hee were to choose, hee would have your company before any he knewe. Mr. W. B. of Lynn, a stout volunteer in the Dreadnought, sayd in my hearing, that you were a deserving person, and of as good a reputation as any young man in the fleet. Another, who was with you at Schellinck's, highly commended your sobriety, carefullnesse, undaunted and lasting courage through all the cours of the warre ; that you had acquired no small knowledge in navigation, as well as the military part. That you understood every thing that belonged unto a shippe ; and had been so strict and criticall an observer of the shippes in the fleet, that you could name any shippe sayling at some distance ; and by some private mark and observation which you had made, would hardly mistake one, if seventie shippes should sayle at a reasonable distance from you. . . . How you behaved yourself in the Foresight, at the hard service at Bergen, in Norway, Captain Brookes, the commander, expressed

unto many before his death, not long after, in Suffolk ; and particularly unto my lord of Sandwich, then admiral, which thoughte you would not tell me yourself, yet was I informed from a person of no small qualitie, C. Harland, who, when you came aboard, the admiral, after the taking of the East India shippes, heard my lord of Sandwich, to speak thus unto you. ' Sir, you are a person whom I am glad to see, and must be better acquainted with you, upon the account which captain Brooke gave mee of you. I must encourage such persons and give them their due, which will stand so firmly and so courageously into it upon extremities, wherein true valour is best discovered. Hee told mee you were the only man that stuck closely and boldly to him unto the last, and that after so many of his men and his lieutenant was slayne, hee could not have well knowne what to have done without you.' But beside these I must not fayle to tell you how well I like it, that you are not only Marti but Mercurio, and very much pleased to find how good a student you have been at sea, and particularly with what success you have read divers bookes there, especially Homer and Juvenal with Lubines notes. Being much surprised to find you so perfect therein that you had them in a manner without booke, and could proceed in any verse I named to you. I am glad you can overcome Lucan. The other bookes which I sent are, I perceive, not hard unto you, and having such industrie adjoined unto your apprehension and memorie, you are like to proceed (not only) a noble navigator, butt a great schollar, which will be much to your honour and my satisfaction and content. I am much pleased to find that you take the draughts of remarkable things where ere you go ; and for that may be very usefull, and will fasten themselves the better in your memorie. You are mightily improved upon the violin, butt I would by no means have you practise upon the trumpet, for many reasons. Your fencing in the shippe may be against the scurvie, butt that knowledge is of little advantage in actions of the sea.

SIR THOMAS BROWNE TO HIS SON DR. EDWARD BROWNE

[*Seventeenth Century Nature Notes*]

DEAR SONNE,—

July 14, 1676.

You have done very well to obtayne the manuscript or booke wch you mention you had from my Lord of Aylesburie's

howse. How you came to knowe of it, or obtayne the use of it, I knowe not; butt I beleeeve you might, if you would putt forward, obtayne such a favor of my lord himself, who when he was at Norwich asked for you. Hee was at Montpellier about the time when you were there. Now you have the booke by you, it will bee fitt to make the best use you canne of it; for perhaps it must bee returned to the French ambassador; or, if hee gave it unto my lord, tis like hee will expect it agayne from you in a short time; and therefore bestowe most of your vacant time about it. Transcribe all you can out of it, and drawe out the most material cutts yourself, by a penne or otherwise, which you can do well enough, for I would not have it out of your hands, and I do not desire that Moreland should have any thing to do with it, for hee will drawe out of it for himself and his owne use and so all the towne will take notice of it. Nor would I have you showe it to any or very fewe, and such as are not like to make use thereof. Blasius (as I sent you word) hath lately published anatomical observations from many animals and probably of many in this booke. Transcribe what you can out of it, and sett downe the names of the animals, and the singular and peculiar observations upon any. The cutts being so fayre, tis probable they are not many. I hope you receaued the paper I sent concerning the fistula of a dolphin. The proper place thereof, it may bee brought in when you speake *de pulm*, or *de respiratione*, and I would not have you omit it; and if you did not keepe the skull of the dolphin you cutt up, I will, God willing, send you one. Tis likely the cutts are not of common animals, at least not altogether, but of such strange animals as have been brought to Paris or some of the king's houses. When you see the elephant, observe whether hee bendeth his knees before and behind foreward differently from other quadrupeds, as Aristotle observeth; and whether his belly be the softest and smoothest part; the testes are not exterior and outward, butt inwardly in the body, as Aristotle. Perhaps the booke hath the dissection of a camell, it were good to observe of what that bunch in the back consisteth, and whether the backbone or spine ariseth up into it, or it bee a lump of flesh upon it, and the spine notwithstanding bee as in others. I thought good to give these hints, because probably they would not come into your mind. My hedge-

hogge, being putt into my garden, gott away with two yong ones, and I never looke to find them agayne; observe the teeth, because you speake of them, *de dentibus*. God bless you all.

Your loving father,  
THO. BROWNE.

For Dr. Edward Browne, in Salisbury Court, next the *Golden Balls*, London.

SIR THOMAS BROWNE TO HIS SON DR. EDWARD BROWNE

[*The Rebellion in Scotland*]

June 28 (1679?).

DEAR SONNE,—

I heard that some shippes passed by Yarmouth, with souldiers in them for Seotland, six or seven dayes past, and the coffie and common news letters tell us something of the rebellion in Seotland, butt I think very imperfectly. A litle more time will better informe us of that buisnesse; and they are like to bee more effectually dealt with and brought to reason by the English forces, when there shall bee a sufficient number of them in Seotland; for the rebells hope, and others doubt, whether those of their nation will fight heartily agaynst them; for tis sayd there are more discontented in Seotland than those in armes. So that this may bee a coal not so soon quenched; though it was begun by the lowest sects, yet the Scots are very tenacious of the Protestant religion, and have entertained feares and jealousies of dessignes to introduce the Roman, from their observation of the affayres in England; and are not like to bee quieted long, without a parliament. And if that should bee broake of to their discontent, they would bee contriving agayne, and the English parliments would bee butt cold in suppressing them. When the duke of Monmouth giveth a further account, wee may see farther into the buisnesse. When the wether proues cold and fitt for dissections, if you have opportunity, take notice of a beare; tis commonly sayd that a beare hath no breast bone, and that hee cannot well runne downe a hill, his heart will so come up toward his throat. Examine therefore the pectorall parts, and endeavour to find out the ground of such an opinion at



opportunity. I once dissected a beare which dyed in Norwich, and I have the lower jaw and teeth ; tis a strong animal, hath notable sinewes and teeth.

This day one came to show mee a booke and to sell it ; it was a *hortus hyemalis*, in a booke, made at Padua, butt I had seen it above thirtie years ago, and it containes not many plants. You had a very good one or two if you have not parted with them. Love and blessing to my daughter Browne and you all.

Your loving father,

THO. BROWNE.

SIR THOMAS BROWNE TO HIS SON DR. EDWARD BROWNE

[*Sickness and the Tobacco habit*]

November 24 (1679).

DEAR SONNE,—

The feverish and aguish distempers, which beganne to be common in August, are now very much abated, and few fall sick thereof ; only there are very great numbers of quartans ; tis also a coughing time. Extraordinarie sickly seasons woorrie physitians, and robb them of their health as well as their quiet ; have therefore a great care of your health, and order your affayres to the best preservation thereof which may bee by temperence, and sobrietie, and a good competence of sleepe. Take heed that tobacco gayne not to much upon you, for the great incomodities that may ensue, and the bewiching qualitie of it, which drawes a man to take more and more the longer hee hath taken it, as also the *ructus nidorosus*, or like burnt hard eggs, and the hart burning after much taking at a time, and also the impayring of the memorie, etc. I am glad you like a playne dyet ; affect butt ordinarie sawces. I thanck you both for the *psoe*, which I desire to see, butt I beleeve it may render the blood more apt to ferment, and bee distempered, and unquiet, and our owne sawces are best agreeable unto our bodyes. . . . God blesse you, my daughter Browne, and you all. Present our service and thancks to Mr. Boone and Mrs. Boone, my cosens Hobbe's, my cosen Cradock, Madame Burwell, Mrs. Dey, and all friends.

SIR THOMAS BROWNE TO HIS SON DR. EDWARD BROWNE

*[On the Medical Profession and other matters]**August 22 (1680).*

DEAR SONNE,—

I was very glad to receaue your last letter. God hath heard our prayers, and I hope will bless you still. If the profitts of the next yeare come not up to this, I would not haue you discouraged ; for the profitts of no practise are equall or regular : and you haue had some extraordinary patients this yeare, which, perhaps, some yeares will not afford. Now is your time to be frugall and lay up. I thought myself rich enough till my children grew up. Be carefull of your self, and tcmperatc, that you may bee able to go through your practise ; for to attayne to the getting of a thousand pounds a yeare requires no small labour of body and mind, and is a life not much lesse paynfull and laborious then that which the meaner sort of people go through. When you putt out your money, bce well assured of the assurance ; and bce wise therein from what your father hath suffered. It is laudable to dwell handsomely ; butt be not too forward to build, or sett forth another mans howse, or so to fill it that it may increase the fuell, if God should please to send fire. The mercifull God direct you in all. Excesse in apparell and chargeable dresses are got into the country, especially among woemen ; men go decently and playn enough. The last assizes there was a concourse of woemen at that they call my lords garden in Cunsford, and so richly dressed that some strangers sayd there was scarce the like to bee seen at High Park, which makes charity cold. Wee now heare that this parliament shall sitt the 21 of October, which will make London very full in Michaclmas terme. Wee heare of two oestriges wch are brought from Tangier. I sawe one in the latter end of King James his dayes, at Greenwich, when I was a schoolboy. King Charles the first had a cassaware, or cmeu, whose fine green channelled egge I have, and you have seen it. I doubt these will not bec showne at Bartholomew fayre, wherc every one may see them for his money. . . . God blesse my daughter Browne and you all.

Your loving father,  
THOMAS BROWNE.

## JOHN MILTON

1608-1674

With two exceptions the following letters of Milton are translations from the Latin originals. The first is Cowper's rendering of Milton's letter in verse to his old tutor, Thomas Young, then chaplain to the English merchants at Hamburg. The tutor held Puritan opinions, which appear to have led to the exile so feelingly deplored by his pupil. In the same year (1625) Milton went from St. Paul's School to Cambridge, where, after one outbreak of youthful indiscipline he earned his nickname of 'the Lady of Christ's' by his virtuous conduct. The second letter was written in 1632, towards the end of his academical career, and gives not only his excuses for his delay in making choice of some profession, but the lines 'On his being arrived at the age of twenty-three'. Milton, was intended for the Church, but the condition of the Church of England, as he found it under Laud, prevented the young Puritan from taking Orders. He retired instead to Horton, to begin his poet's career in earnest, and six years later, to make his tour in Italy, when the letter to Benedetto Buonmatti was written. This letter, and the letters to Lord Henry de Bras and Leonard Philara, the Athenian—giving a pathetic account of the poet's blindness—are taken from Milton's *Familiar Letters*, translated by Fellowes. The remaining letter—to John Bradshaw the regicide—was written while the poet was Secretary of Foreign Tongues to the Commonwealth, and is interesting for its reference to Andrew Marvell, who became one of his assistants. Owing to his blindness, the poet's letter was written by an amanuensis, who obviously did not know how to spell any of the names correctly. The original of the letter, written in a boyish hand, still exists.

JOHN MILTON 'TO HIS TUTOR, THOMAS YOUNG, CHAPLAIN TO  
THE ENGLISH FACTORY AT HAMBURGH'

[Written in the Author's Eighteenth Year—Cowper's rendering  
of the Latin Original]

HENCE, my epistle—skim the deep—fly o'er  
Yon smooth expanse to the Teutonic shore!  
Haste—lest a friend should grieve for thy delay,  
And the gods grant, that nothing thwart thy way!  
I will myself invoke the king, who binds,  
In his Sicanian echoing vault, the winds,  
With Doris and her nymphs, and all the throng  
Of azure gods, to speed thee safe along.  
But rather to ensure thy happier haste,  
Ascend Medea's chariot, if thou may'st;  
Or that, whence young Triptolemus of yore  
Descended, welcome to the Scythian shore.

The sands, that line the German coast, desiered,  
 To opulent Hamburga turn aside !  
 So ealled, if legendary fame be true,  
 From Hama, whom a elub-arm'd Cimbrian slew.  
 There lives, deep-learn'd and primitively just,  
 A faithful steward of his Christian trust,  
 My friend, and favourite inmate of my heart,  
 That now is forced to want its better part.  
 What mountains now, and seas, alas, how wide !  
 From me this other, dearer self divide,  
 Dear, as the sage renown'd for moral truth  
 To the prime spirit of the Attie youth ;  
 Dear, as the Stagyrte to Ammon's son,  
 His pupil, who disdain'd the world he won ;  
 Not so did Chiron, or so Phoenix shine  
 In young Aehilles' eyes, as he in mine.  
 First led by him through sweet Aonian shade,  
 Each saered haunt of Pindus I survey'd ;  
 And favour'd by the muse, whom I implor'd,  
 Thrice on my lip the hallow'd stream I pour'd.  
 But thrice the sun's resplendent chariot roll'd  
 To Aries, has new-tinged his fleecce with gold,  
 And Chloris twiee has dress'd the meadows gay,  
 And twiee has summer parch'd their bloom away,  
 Since last delighted on his looks I hung,  
 Or my ear drank the musie of his tongue :  
 Fly, therefore, and surpass the tempest's speed ;  
 Aware thyself, that there is urgent need !  
 Him, entering, thou shalt haply seated see  
 Beside his spouse, his infants on his knee ;  
 Or, turning, page by page, with studious look,  
 Some bulky father, or God's holy book ;  
 Or ministering (which is his weightiest care)  
 To Christ's assembled flock their heavenly fare.  
 Give him, whatever his employment be,  
 Such gratulation, as he elaims, from me ;  
 And, with a down-cast eye, and earriage meek,  
 Addressing him, forget not thus to speak !  
 ' If, compass'd round with arms thou canst attend  
 To verse, verse greets thee from a distant friend.  
 Long due, and late, I left the English shore ;

But make me welcome for that cause the more !  
Such from Ulysses, his chaste wife to cheer,  
The slow epistle came, though late, sincere.  
But wherefore this ? Why palliate I the deed,  
For which the culprit's self could hardly plead ?  
Self-charged and self-condemn'd, his proper part  
He feels neglected, with an aching heart ;  
But thou forgive ! Delinquents, who confess,  
And pray forgiveness, merit anger less ;  
From timid foes the lion turns away,  
Nor yawns upon or rends a crouching prey ;  
Even pike-wielding Thracians learn to spare,  
Won by soft influence of a suppliant prayer ;  
And Heaven's dread thunderbolt arrested stands  
By a cheap vietim, and uplifted hands.  
Long had he wish'd to write, but was withheld,  
And, writes at last, by love alone compell'd ;  
For fame, too often true when she alarms,  
Reports thy neighbouring fields a scene of arms ;  
Thy city against fierce besiegers barr'd,  
And all the Saxon chiefs for fight prepared.  
Enyo wastes thy country wide around,  
And saturates with blood the tainted ground ;  
Mars rests contented in his Thraee no more,  
But goads his steeds to fields of German gore,  
The ever verdant olive fades and dies,  
And Peace, the trumpet-hating goddess, flies.  
Flies from that earth which justice long had left,  
And leaves the world of its last guard bereft.

' Thus horror girds thee round. Meantime alone  
Thou dwell'st, and helpless in a soil unknown ;  
Poor, and receiving from a foreign hand  
The aid denied thee in thy native land.  
Oh, ruthless country, and unfeeling more  
Than thy own billow-beaten chalky shore !  
Leavest thou to foreign care the worthies, given  
By Providence, to guide thy steps to heaven ?  
His ministers, commission'd to proclaim  
Eternal blessings in a Saviour's name ?  
Ah then most worthy, with a soul unfed,  
In Stygian night to lie for ever dead !



So once the venerable Tishbite stray'd  
 An exiled fugitive from shade to shade,  
 When, flying Ahab, and his fury wife,  
 In lone Arabian wilds, he shelter'd life ;  
 So from Philippha, wander'd forth forlorn  
 Cilician Paul, with sounding scourges torn ;  
 And Christ himself so left, and trod no more,  
 The thankless Gergesene's forbidden shore.

' But thou take courage ! Strive against despair !  
 Quake not with dread, nor nourish anxious care !  
 Grim war indeed on every side appears,  
 And thou art menaced by a thousand spears ;  
 Yet none shall drink thy blood, or shall offend  
 Even the defenceless bosom of my friend.  
 For thee the ægis of thy God shall hide,  
 Jehovah's self shall combat on thy side.  
 The same, who vanquish'd under Sion's towers  
 At silent midnight, all Assyria's powers ;  
 The same, who overthrew in ages past  
 Damascus' sons that laid Samaria waste !  
 Their king he fill'd and them with fatal fears  
 By mimic sounds of clarions in their ears,  
 Of hoofs, and wheels, and neighings from afar,  
 Of clashing armour, and the din of war.

' Thou, therefore (as the most afflicted may),  
 Still hope, and triumph o'er thy evil day !  
 Look forth, expecting happier times to come,  
 And to enjoy, once more, thy native home.

#### JOHN MILTON TO A FRIEND

*[His reasons for delay in choosing a profession]*

About 1632.

SIR,—

Besides that in sundry respects I must acknowledge me to profit by you whenever we meet, you are often to me, and were yesterday especially, as a good watchman to admonish, that the hours of the night pass on (for so I call my life, as yet obscure and unserviceable to mankind), and that the day with me is at hand wherein Christ commands all to labour while there is light. Which because I am persuaded you do

to no other purpose than out of a true desire that God should be honoured in every one, I therefore think myself bound, though unasked, to give you an account, as oft as occasion is, of this my tardy moving, according to the precept of my conscience, which I firmly trust is not without God. Yet now I will not strain for any set apology, but only refer myself to what my mind shall have at any time to declare herself at her best ease. But if you think, as you said, that too much love of learning is in fault, and that I have given up myself to dream away my years in the arms of studious retirement, like Endymion with the moon, as the tale of Latmus goes; yet consider that if it were no more than the mere love of learning—whether it proceed from a principle bad, good, or natural—it could not have held out thus long against a strong opposition on the other side of every kind. For if it be bad, why should not all the fond hopes that forward youth and vanity are fledge with, together with gain, pride, and ambition, call me forward more powerfully than a poor, regardless, and unprofitable sin of curiosity should be able to withhold me; whereby a man cuts himself off from all action and becomes the most helpless, pusillanimous, and unweaponed creature in the world, the most unfit and unable to do that which all mortals most aspire to, either to be useful to his friends or to offend his enemies? Of if it be to be thought a natural proneness, there is against that a much more potent inclination inbred, which about this time of a man's life solicits most—the desire of house and family of his own, to which nothing is esteemed more helpful than the early entering into credible employment, and nothing hindering than this affected solitariness. And though this were enough, yet is there another act, if not of pure yet of refined nature, no less available to dissuade prolonged obscurity, a desire of honour and repute and immortal fame, seated in the breast of every true scholar; which all make haste to by the readiest ways of publishing and divulging conceived merits—as well those that shall as those that never shall obtain it. Nature, therefore, would presently work the more prevalent way, if there were nothing but this inferior bent of herself to restrain her. Lastly, the love of learning, as it is the pursuit of something good, it would sooner follow the more excellent and supreme good known and presented, and so be quickly diverted from the

empty and fantastic chase of shadows and notions, to the solid good flowing from due and timely obedience to that command in the gospel set out by the terrible feasting of him that hid the talent. It is more probable, therefore, that not the endless delight of speculation, but this very consideration of that great commandment does not press forward as soon as many do, to undergo, but keeps off, with a sacred reverence and religious advisement how *best* to undergo, not taking thought of being *late*, so it give advantage to be more fit; for those that were latest lost nothing when the Master of the vineyard came to give each one his hire. And here I am come to a stream head, copious enough to disburden itself, like Nilus, at seven mouths into an ocean. But then I should run into a reciprocal contradiction of ebbing and flowing at once, and do that which I excuse myself for not doing—preach and not preach. Yet, that you may see that I am something suspicious of myself, and do take notice of a certain belatedness in me, I am the bolder to send you some of my nightward thoughts some while since, because they come in not altogether unfitly, made up in a Petrarchian stanza, which I told you of:—

*On his being arrived at the age of twenty-three*

How soon hath time, the subtle thief of youth,  
 Stol'n on his wing my three-and-twentieth year!  
 My hasting days fly on with full career,  
 But my late spring no bud or blossom sheweth.  
 Perhaps my semblance might deceive the truth,  
 That I to manhood am arrived so near;  
 And inward ripeness doth much less appear  
 Than some more timely spirits endu'th,  
 Yet be it less or more, or soon or slow,  
 It shall be still in strictest measure even  
 To that same lot, however mean or high,  
 Toward which time leads me, and the will of Heaven.  
 All is, if I have grace to use it so,  
 As ever in my great taskmaster's eye.

By this I believe you may well repent of having made mention at all of this matter; for if I have not all this while won you to this, I have certainly wearied you of it. This, therefore, may be a sufficient reason for me to keep as I am, lest having thus tired you singly, I should deal worse with a whole con-

gregation, and spoil all the patience of a parish ; for I myself do not only see my own tediousness, but now grow offended with it. That has hindered me thus long from coming to the last and best *period* of my letter, and that which must now chiefly work my pardon, that I am,

Your true and unfeigned friend.

JOHN MILTON TO BENEDETTO BUONMATTAI, A FLORENTINE

[*The Glory of the Italian language*]

Florence, *September* 10, 1658.

I am glad to hear, my dear Buonmattai, that you are preparing new institutes of your native language, and have just brought the work to a conclusion. The way to fame which you have chosen is the same as that which some persons of the first genius have embraced ; and your fellow-citizens seem ardently to expect that you will either illustrate or amplify, or at least polish and methodize, the labours of your predecessors. By such a work you will lay your countrymen under no common obligation, which they will be ungrateful if they do not acknowledge. For I hold him to deserve the highest praises who fixes the principles and forms the manners of a state, and makes the wisdom of his administration conspicuous both at home and abroad. But I assign the second place to him, who endeavours by precepts and by rules to perpetuate that style and idiom of speech and composition which have flourished in the purest periods of the language, and who, as it were, throws up such a trench around it, that people may be prevented from going beyond the boundary almost by the terrors of a Romulean prohibition. If we compare the benefits which each of these confer, we shall find that the former alone render the intercourse of the citizens just and conscientious, but that the latter gives that gentility, that elegance, that refinement which are next to be desired. The one inspires lofty courage and intrepid ardour against the invasion of an enemy ; the other exerts himself to annihilate that barbarism which commits more extensive ravages on the minds of men, which is the intestine enemy of genius and literature, by the taste which he inspires, and the good authors which he causes to be read. Nor do I think it a matter of

little moment whether the language of a people be vitiated or refined, whether the popular idiom be erroneous or correct. This consideration was more than once found salutary at Athens. It is the opinion of Plato, that changes in the dress and habits of the citizens portend great commotions and changes in the state ; and I am inclined to believe, that when the language in common use in any country becomes irregular and depraved, it is followed by their ruin or their degradation. For what do terms used without skill or meaning, which are at once corrupt and misapplied, denote, but a people listless, supine, and ripe for servitude ? On the contrary, we have never heard of any people or state which has not flourished in some degree of prosperity as long as their language has retained its elegance and its purity. Hence, my Benedetto, you may be induced to proceed in executing a work so useful to your country, and may clearly see what an honourable and permanent claim you will have to the approbation and the gratitude of your fellow-citizens. Thus much I have said, not to make you acquainted with that of which you were ignorant, but because I was persuaded that you are more intent on serving your country than in considering that just title which you have to its remuneration. I will now mention the favourable opportunity which you have, if you wish to embrace it, of obliging foreigners, among whom there is no one at all conspicuous for genius or for elegance who does not make the Tuscan language his delight, and indeed consider it as an essential part of education, particularly if he be only slightly tinctured with the literature of Greece or of Rome. I, who certainly have not merely wetted the tip of my lips in the stream of those languages, but, in proportion to my years, have swallowed the most copious draughts, can yet sometimes retire with avidity and delight to feast on Dante, Petrarch, and many others ; nor has Athens itself been able to confine me to the transparent wave of its Ilissus, nor ancient Rome to the banks of its Tiber, so as to prevent my visiting with delight the stream of the Arno, and the hills of Fæsolæ. A stranger from the shores of the farthest ocean, I have now spent some days among you, and am become quite enamoured of your nation. Consider whether there were sufficient reason for my preference, that you may more readily remember what I so earnestly importune ; that you would, for the sake of for-



eiguers, add something to the grammar which you have begun, and indeed almost finished, concerning the right pronunciation of the language, and made as easy as the nature of the subject will admit. The other critics in your language seem to this day to have had no other design than to satisfy their own countrymen, without taking any concern about anybody else. Though I think that they would have provided better for their own reputation and for the glory of the Italian language, if they had delivered their respects in such a manner as if it was for the interest of all men to learn their language. But, for all them, we might think that you Italians wished to confine your wisdom within the pomærium of the Alps. This praise, therefore, which no one has anticipated, will be entirely yours, immaculate and pure ; nor will it be less so if you will be at the pains to point out who may justly claim the second rank of fame after the renowned chief of the Florentine literature ; who excels in the dignity of tragedy, or the festivity and elegance of comedy ; who has shown acuteness of remark or depth of reflection in his epistles or dialogues ; to whom belongs the grandeur of the historic style. Thus it will be easy for the student to choose the best writers in every department ; and if he wishes to extend his researches farther, he will know which way to take. Among the ancients you will in this respect find Cicero and Fabius deserving of your imitation ; but I know not one of your own countrymen who does. But though I think as often as I have mentioned this subject that your courtesy and benignity have induced you to comply with my request, I am unwilling that those qualities should deprive you of the homage of a more polished and elaborate entreaty. For since your singular modesty is so apt to depreciate your own performances ; the dignity of the subject, and my respect for you, will not suffer me to rate them below their worth. And it is certainly just that he who shows the greatest facility in complying with a request, should not receive the less honour on account of his compliance. On this occasion I have employed the Latin rather than your own language, that I might in Latin confess my imperfect acquaintance with that language which I wish you by your precepts to embellish and adorn. And I hoped that if I invoked the venerable Latian mother, hoary with years, and crowned with the respect of ages, to plead the cause of her daughter, I should

give to my request a force and authority which nothing could resist. Adieu.

JOHN MILTON TO JOHN BRADSHAW

[Suggests Andrew Marvell as one of his assistants]

February 21, 1652.

MY LORD,—

But that it would be an interruption to the public, wherein your studies are perpetually employed, I should now and then venture to supply thus my enforced absence with a line or two, though it were only of businesse, and that would be noe slight one, to make my due acknowledgments of your many favours ; which I both doe at this time, and ever shall : and have this farder, which I thought my parte to let you know of, that there will be with you to-morrow, upon some occasion of business, a gentleman whose name is Mr. Marvile <sup>1</sup> ; a man whom, both by report, and the converse I have had with him, of singular desert for the State to make use of ; who alsoe offers himselfe, if there be any employment for him. His father was the Minister of Hull ; and he hath spent four years already in Holland, France, Italy, and Spaine, to very good purpose, as I believe, and the gaineing of those four languages ; besides, he is a scholler, and well read in the Latin and Greek authors ; and no doubt of an approved conversation, for he comes now lately out of the house of the Lord Fairfax, who was a Generall, where he was intrusted to give some instructions in the languages to the Lady, his daughter. If upon the death of Mr. Weckerlyn,<sup>2</sup> the Councell shall think that I shall need any assistance in the performance of my place (though for my part I find no encumbrances of that which belongs to me, except it be in point of attendance at Conferences with Ambassadors, which I must confess in my condition I am not fit for), it would be hard for them to find a man soe fit every way for that purpose as this gentleman ; one who, I believe, in a short time, would be able to do them as much service as Mr. Ascan.<sup>3</sup> This, my lord, I write sincerely, without

<sup>1</sup> Andrew Marvell.

<sup>2</sup> G. R. Weckherlin, died 1653.

<sup>3</sup> Antony Ascham, died 1650.

any other end than to perform my duty to the publick, and helping them to an humble servant : laying aside those jealousies and that emulation, which mine own condition must suggest to me, by bringing in such a coadjutor ; and remaine, my lord,  
Your most obliged and faithful servant,

JOHN MILTON.

JOHN MILTON TO LEONARD PHILARA, THE ATHENIAN

[*On his blindness*]

Westminster, *September 26, 1654.*

I have been always devotedly attached to the literature of Greece, and particularly to that of your Athens ; and have never ceased to cherish the persuasion that that city would one day make me ample recompense for the warmth of my regard. The ancient genius of your renowned country has favored the completion of my prophecy in presenting me with your friendship and esteem. Though I was known to you only by my writings, and we were removed to such a distance from each other, you most courteously addressed me by letter ; and when you unexpectedly came to London and saw me who could no longer see, my affliction, which causes none to regard me with greater admiration, and perhaps many even with feelings of contempt, excited your tenderest sympathy and concern. You would not suffer me to abandon the hope of recovering my sight, and informed me you had an intimate friend at Paris—Dr. Thevenot—who was particularly celebrated in disorders of the eyes, whom you would consult about mine, if I would enable you to lay before him the causes and symptoms of the complaint. I will do what you desire, lest I seem to reject that aid which, perhaps, may be offered me by Heaven. It is now, I think, about ten years since I perceived my vision to grow weak and dull, and, at the same time, I was troubled with pain in my kidneys and bowels, accompanied with flatulency. In the morning, if I began to read, as was my custom, my eyes instantly ached intensely, but were refreshed after a little corporeal exercise. The candle which I looked at seemed as it were encircled with a rainbow. Not long after, the sight in the left part of the left eye (which I lost some years before the other) became quite obscured, and prevented me from discerning any object on that side. The

sight in my other eye has now been gradually and sensibly vanishing away for about three years ; some months before it had entirely perished, though I stood motionless, everything I looked at seemed in motion to and fro. A stiff, cloudy vapor seemed to have settled on my forehead and temples, which usually occasions a sort of somnolent pressure upon my eyes, and particularly from dinner till the evening. So that I often recollect what is said of the poet Phineas in the Argonautics :

A stupor deep his cloudy temples bound,  
And when he walked he seemed as whirling round,  
Or in a feeble trance he speechless lay.

I ought not to omit that while I had my sight, as soon as I lay down on my bed and turned on either side, a flood of light used to gush from my closed eyelids. Then, as my sight became daily more impaired, the colours became more faint, and were emitted with a certain inward crackling sound ; but at present, every species of illumination being as it were extinguished, there is diffused around me nothing but darkness, or darkness mingled and streaked with an ashy brown. Yet the darkness in which I am perpetually immersed seems always, both night and day, to approach nearer to white than black ; and when the eye is rolling in its socket, it admits a little particle of light, as through a chink. And, though your physician may kindle a small ray of hope, yet I make up my mind to the malady as quite incurable ; and I often reflect, that as the wise man admonishes, days of darkness are destined to each of us, the darkness which I experience, less oppressive than that of the tomb, is, owing to the singular goodness of the Deity, passed amid the pursuits of literature, and the cheering salutations of friendship. But if, as is written, man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth from the mouth of God, why may not any one acquiesce in the privation of his sight, when God has so amply furnished his mind and his conscience with eyes ? While He so tenderly provides for me, while He so graciously leads me by the hand, and conducts me on the way, I will, since it is His pleasure, rather rejoice than repine at being blind. And, my dear Philara, whatever may be the event, I bid you adieu with no less courage and composure than if I had the eyes of a lynx.

JOHN MILTON TO THE ILLUSTRIOUS LORD HENRY DE BRAS

[*On the Latin historians*]

Westminster, July 15, 1657.

I see, my lord, that you, unlike most of our modern youth who pass through foreign countries, wisely travel, like the ancient philosophers, for the sake of completing your juvenile studies, and of picking up knowledge wherever it may be found. Though as often as I consider the excellence of what you write you appear to me to have gone among foreigners not for the sake of procuring erudition yourself as of imparting it to others, and rather to exchange than to purchase a stock of literature. I wish it were as easy for me in every way to promote the increase of your knowledge and the improvement of your intellect, as it is pleasing and flattering to me to have the assistance requested by talents and genius like yours. I have never attempted, and I should never dare to attempt, to solve those difficulties as you request, which seem to have cast a cloud over the writers of history for so many ages. Of Sallust I will speak as you desire without any hesitation or reserve. I prefer him to any of the Latin historians ; which was also the general opinion of the ancients. Your favourite Tacitus deserves his meed of praise ; but his highest praise, in my opinion, consists in his having imitated Sallust with all his might. By my conversation with you on this subject I seem, as far as I can guess from your letter, to have inspired you with sentiments very similar to my own, concerning that most energetic and animated writer. As he in the beginning of his Catilinarian war asserted that there was the greatest difficulty in historical composition, because the style should correspond with the nature of the narrative, you ask me how a writer of history may best attain that excellence. My opinion is that he who would describe actions and events in a way suited to their dignity and importance, ought to write with a mind endued with a spirit, and enlarged by an experience, as extensive as the actors in the scene, that he may have a capacity properly to comprehend and to estimate the most momentous affairs, and to relate them, when comprehended, with energy and distinctness, with purity and perspicuity of diction. The decorations of style I do not greatly heed ; for I require an



historian and not a rhetorician. I do not want frequent interspersions of sentiment, or prolix dissertations on transactions, which interrupt the series of events, and cause the historian to entrench on the office of the politician, who if in explaining counsels, and explaining facts, he follows truth rather than his own partialities and conjectures, excites the disgust or the aversion of his party. I will add a remark of Sallust, and which was one of the excellencies he himself commends in Cato, that he should be able to say much in a few words ; a perfection which I think no one can attain without the most discriminating judgment and a peculiar degree of moderation. There are many in whom you have not to regret either elegance of diction or copiousness of narrative, who have yet united copiousness with brevity. And among these Sallust is in my opinion the chief of the Latin writers. Such are the virtues which I think every historian ought to possess who would proportion his style to the facts which he records. But why do I mention this to you, when such is your genius that you need not my advice, and when such is your proficiency that if it goes on increasing you will soon not be able to consult any more learned than yourself ? To the increase of that proficiency, though no exhortations can be necessary to stimulate your exertions, yet that I may not seem entirely to frustrate your expectations, I will beseech you, with all my affection, all my authority, and all my zeal, to let nothing relax your diligence, or chill the ardour of your pursuit. Adieu, and may you ever successfully labour in the path of wisdom and virtue.

#### ANDREW MARVELL

1621-1678

ANDREW MARVELL did not get his appointment as assistant to Milton in the secretaryship for foreign tongues until five years after the blind poet's recommendation to Bradshaw, but meantime he carried a presentation copy of Milton's *Defensio Secunda* to the president of the council of state, and, having done so, sent word to Milton to that effect. Milton apparently was not satisfied with this brief account of the reception of his gift, and asked for further particulars. The following letter is Marvell's reply. Previously to becoming Milton's colleague in the Latin secretaryship the poet of Cromwell and the Protectorate was given the post of tutor to Cromwell's ward, William Dutton, with whom he went to reside at

Eton, in the house of John Oxenbridge, one of the Fellows of the College. It was while in this capacity that his second letter was written—to Cromwell, on July 28, 1653.

ANDREW MARVELL, 'FOR MY MOST HONOURED FRIEND, JOHN MILTON, ESQUIRE, SECRETARYE FOR THE FORRAIN AFFAIRES, AT HIS HOUSE IN PETTY FRANCE, WESTMINSTER.'

[*Bradshaw's reception of Milton's 'Defensio Secunda'*]

Eaton, June 2, 1654.

HONOURED SIR,—

I did not satisfie myself in the account I gave you of presenting your Book to my Lord, although it seemed to me that I writ to you all which the messenger's speedy returne the same night from Eaton would permit me ; and I perceive that, by reason of that hast, I did not give you satisfaction neither concerninge the delivery of your letter at the same time. Be pleased therefore to pardon me, and know that I tendered them both together. But my Lord read not the Letter while I was with him, which I attributed to our despatch, and some other businesse tendinge thereto, which I therefore wished ill to so farr as it hindred an affaire much better and of greater importance, I mean that of reading your Letter. And to tell you truly mine own imagination, I thought that he would not open it while I was there, because he might suspect that I, delivering it just upon my departure, might have brought in it some second proposition like to that which you had before made to him by your Letter to my advantage. However, I assure myself that he has since read it, and you, that he did then witsesse all respecte to your person, and as much satisfaction concerninge your work as could be expected from so cursory a review and so sudden an account as he could then have of it from me. Mr. Oxenbridge, at his returne from London, will, I know, give you thanks for his book, as I do with all acknowledgement and humility for that you have sent me. I shall now studie it even to the getting of it by heart : esteeming it, according to my poore judgment (which yet I wish it were so right in all things else), as the most compendious scale for so much to the height of the Roman Eloquence. When I consider how equally it turnes and rises with so many figures it

seems to me a Trajan's columnne, in whose winding accent we see imboss'd the severall monuments of your learned victoryes. And Salmatius and Morus make up as great a triumph as that of Decebalus, whom too, for ought I know, you shall have forced, as Trajan the other, to make themselves a way out of a just desperation. I have an affectionate curiosity to know what becomes of Colonell Overton's businesse. And am exceedingly glad that Mr. Skynner is got near you, the happiness which I at the same time congratulate to him, and envie, there being none who doth, if I may so say, more jealously honour you than,

Honoured Sir,

Your most affectionate humble servant,

ANDREW MARVELL.

ANDREW MARVELL TO OLIVER CROMWELL

[*Written while tutor to the Protector's ward, William Dutton*]

Windsor, July 28, 1653.

MAY PLEASE YOUR EXCELLENCE,—

It might, perhaps, seem fit for me to seek out words to give your Excellence thanks for myself. But, indeed, the only civility which it is proper for me to practise with so eminent a person is to obey you, and to perform honestly the work that you have set me about. Therefore I shall use the time your Lordship is pleased to allow me for writing, only for that purpose for which you have given me it ; that is, to render you an account of Mr. Dutton. I have taken care to examine him several times in the presence of Mr. Oxenbridge, as those who weigh and tell over money before some witness are they take charge of it ; for I thought that there might be possibly some lightness in the coyn, or error in the telling, which hereafter I should be bound to make good. Therefore, Mr. Oxenbridge is the best to make your Excellency an impartial relation thereof : I shall only say, that I shall strive according to my best understanding (that is, according to those rules your Lordship hath given me) to increase whatsoever talent he may have already. Truly, he is of gentle and waxen disposition ; and God be praised, I cannot say he hath brought with him any evil impression ; and I shall hope to set nothing into his spirit but what may be of good sculpture.

He hath in him two things that make youth more easy to be managed, modesty, which is the bridle to vice ; and emulation, which is the spur to virtue. And the care which your Excellence is pleased to take of him is no small encouragement and shall be so represented to him ; but, above all, I shall labour to make him sensible of his duty to God ; for then we begin to serve faithfully, when we consider He is our master. And in this, both he and I owe infinitely to your Lordship, for having placed us in so godly a family as that of Mr. Oxenbridge, whose doctrine and example are like a book and a map, not only instructing the ear, but demonstrating to the eye, which way we ought to travell ; and Mrs. Oxenbridge has looked so well to him, that he hath already much mended his complexion ; and now she is ordering his chamber that he might delight to be in it as often as his studys require. For the rest, most of this time hath been spent in acquainting ourselvcs with him ; and truly he is chearfull, and I hope thinks us to be good company. I shall, upon occasion, henceforward inform your Excellence of any particularities in our little affairs, for so I esteem it to be my duty. I have no more at present, but to give thanks to God for your Lordship, and to beg grace of Him, that I may approve myself

Your Excellency's

Most humble and faithful servant,

ANDREW MARVELL.

## THE DUCHESS OF NEWCASTLE

1624 ?-1674

MARGARET CAVENDISH, the learned and eccentric Duchess of Newcastle, had been derided by Charles the Second's Court at the Restoration, although her husband had spent nearly a million sterling in the Royal service. In the following characteristic letter the Duchess pours out her literary woes. On the death of the Duke—who had himself been something of a poet and playwright, and a generous patron of both Ben Jonson and Dryden—she wrote his life, and five years later followed him to the grave.

MARGARET, DUCHESS OF NEWCASTLE, TO HER HUSBAND, THE  
DUKE OF NEWCASTLE

[*On 'the Malice and Aspersions of Spiteful tongues'*]

London, 1667.

Certainly, my Lord, you have had as many enemies and as

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many friends as ever any one particular person had ; nor do I so much wonder at it, since I, a woman, cannot be exempt from the malice and aspersions of spiteful tongues which they cast upon my poor writings, some denying me to be the true authoress of them ; for your grace remembers well, that those books I put out first to the judgment of this censorious age were accounted not to be written by a woman, but that somebody else had writ and published them in my name ; by which your lordship was moved to prefix an epistle before one of them in my vindication, wherein you assure the world, upon your honour, that what was written and printed in my name was my own ; and I have also made known that your lordship was my only tutor, in declaring to me what you had found and observed by your own experience ; for I being young when your lordship married me, could not have much knowledge of the world ; but it pleased God to command his servant Nature to endue me with a poetical and philosophical genius, even from my birth ; for I did write some books in that kind before I was twelve years of age, which for want of good method and order I would never divulge. But though the world would not believe that those conceptions and fancies which I writ were my own, but transcended my capacity, yet they found fault, that they were defective for want of learning, and on the other side, they said I had pluckt feathers out of the universities ; which was a very preposterous judgment. Truly, my lord, I confess that for want of scholarship, I could not express myself so well as otherwise I might have done in those philosophical writings I published first ; but after I was returned with your lordship into my native country, and led a retired country life, I applied myself to the reading of philosophical authors, on purpose to learn those names and words of art that are used in schools ; which at first were so hard to me, that I could not understand them, but was fain to guess at the sence of them by the whole context, and so writ them down, as I found them in those authors ; at which my readers did wonder, and thought it impossible that a woman could have so much learning and understanding in terms of art and scholastical expressions ; so that I and my books are like the old apologue mentioned in *Æsop*, of a father and his son who rid on an ass . . . . But I am not so passionate to burn my writings for the various humours of mankind, and for their



finding fault; since there is nothing in this world, be it the noblest and most commendable action whatsoever, that shall escape blameless. As for my being the true and only authoress of them, your lordship knows best; and my attending servants are witness that I have had none but my own thoughts, fancies, and speculations, to assist me; and as soon as I set them down I send them to those that are to transcribe them, and fit them for the press; whereof, since there have been several, and amongst them such as only could write a good hand, but neither understood orthography, nor had any learning (I being then in banishment, with your lordship, and not able to maintain learned secretaries), which hath been a great disadvantage to my poor works, and the cause that they have been printed so false and so full of errors; for besides that I want also skill in scholarship and true writing, I did many time not peruse the copies that were transcribed, lest they should disturb my following conceptions; by which neglect, as I said, many errors are slipt into my works, which, yet I hope, learned and impartial men will soon rectify, and look more upon the sense than carp at words. I have been a student even from childhood; and since I have been your lordship's wife, I have lived for the most part a strict and retired life, as is best known to your lordship; and therefore my censurers cannot know much of me, since they have little or no acquaintance with me. 'Tis true I have been a traveller both before and after I was married to your lordship, and sometimes shown myself at your lordship's command in public places or assemblies, but yet I converse with few. Indeed, my lord, I matter not the censures of this age, but am rather proud of them; for it shows that my actions are more than ordinary, and according to the old proverb, it is better to be envied than pitied; for I know well that it is mercy out of spite and malice, whereof this present age is so full that none can escape them, and they'll make no doubt to stain even your lordship's loyal, noble, and heroic actions as well as they do mine; though yours have been of war and fighting, mine of contemplating and writing: yours were performed publicly in the field, mine privately in my closet: yours had many thousand eye-witnesses; mine none but my waiting-maids. But the great God, that hitherto bless'd both

your grace and me, will, I question not, preserve both our fames to after ages.

Your grace's honest wife and humble servant,

M. NEWCASTLE.

## IZAAK WALTON

1593-1683

IZAAK WALTON was eighty-seven when he wrote the following letter to John Aubrey, the antiquary, who needed the information, apparently, for his brother antiquary and historian, Anthony à Wood. 'Brave Ben', as Izaak Walton calls Jonson, had then been dead forty-three years, and William Harvey, the discoverer of the circulation of the blood—about whom there is also an interesting reference in the letter—twenty-three years dead. Walton had been a close friend of Dr. Donne—vicar of his parish of St. Dunstan,—whose life he wrote in one of the most charming, if unreliable, little biographies in English literature. He was sixty when his *Compleat Angler* made its first appearance, and he lived long enough to see it go through at least four editions. It has been reprinted considerably more than a hundred times since his death.

### IZAAK WALTON TO JOHN AUBREY

[*'So much for brave Ben'—and others*]

December 2, 1680.

FOR YOUR FRIENDS' QUÆ. THIS,—

I only knew Ben Jonson, but my Lord of Winton knew him very well, and says he was in the 6th, that is the uppermost form in Westminster School, at which time his father died, and his mother married a bricklayer, who made him (much against his will) to help him in his trade. But in a short time his schoolmaster, Mr. Camden, got him in better employment, which was to attend or accompany a son of Sir Walter Runleyes in his travels. Within a short time after their return, they parted (I think not in cold blood) and with a love suitable to what they had in their travels (not to be commended); and then Ben began to set up for himself in the trade by which he got his subsistence and fame, of which I need not give any account. He got in time to have a £100 a year from the King, also a pension from the city, and the like from many of the nobility, and some of the gentry, which was well paid for love or fear of his railing in verse or prose or both.

My Lord of Winton told me, he told him he was (in his long retirement and sickness, when he saw him, which was often) much afflicted that he had profaned the Scripture in his plays, and lamented it with horror; yet at that time of his long retirement, his pensions (so much as came in) were given to a woman that governed him, with whom he lived and died near the Abbey at Westminster; and that neither he nor she took much care for next week, and would be sure not to want wine, of which he usually took too much before he went to bed, if not oftener and sooner. My Lord tells me, he knows not, but thinks he was born in Westminster. The question may be put to Mr. Wood very easily upon what grounds he is positive as to his being born there? he is a friendly man and will resolve it. So much for brave Ben.

For your 2nd and 3rd quæ. of Mr. Hill and Billingsley, I do neither know nor can learn anything worth telling you. For your remaining quæ. of Mr. Warner and Mr. Hariott, this:—Mr. Warner did long and constantly lodge near the water stairs or market in Woolstable (Woolstable is a place or lane not far from Charing Cross, and nearer to Northumberland House). My Lord of Winchester tells me he knew him, and that he said he first found out the circulation of the blood, and discovered it to Dr. Harvey (who said that 'twas he himself that found it) for which he is so memorably famous. Warner had a pension of £40 from the Earl of Northumberland that lay so long a prisoner in the Tower, and some allowance from Sir Thomas Alesbury with whom he usually spent his summer in Windsor Park. Mr. Hariott, my Lord tells me knew also, that he was a more gentle man than Warner. That he had £120 a year pension from the said Earl and his lodging in Sion House where he believes he died.

This is all I know or can learn for your friend, which I wish may be worth the time and trouble of reading it.

I. W.

# SAMUEL PEPYS

1633—1703

THE diaries of both Pepys and Evelyn remained in manuscript form until the nineteenth century, and then, curiously enough, appeared within a few years of each other. The shorthand MS. of Pepys's diary was deciphered by

the Rev. John Smith and edited by Lord Braybrooke, in 1825, but the whole of it—with the exception of a few passages which can never be printed—was not published until Mr. H. B. Wheatley's edition appeared in eight volumes in 1893-96. The following letter to Pepys's friend Evelyn refers to the manuscript *History of the Dutch War*, which, apparently, was not after all returned to Evelyn, and has never since been traced.

SAMUEL PEPYS TO JOHN EVELYN

[*Papers that were never returned*]

SIR,—

The last being Confession, this in all good conscience should be Restitution Week ; and, as far as I am able, the first act of it shall be the acquitting myself honestly towards you, in reference to that vast treasure of papers which I have had of yours so many years in my hands, in hopes of that *otium* I have now for three years been master of, but on conditions easily to be guessed at ; and it is not above three weeks since I have taken the liberty of remanding any of them within my reach. Out of these I have made shift to collect all that relate to the State concernment in the ministry of Sir R. Browne, and those of your own growth towards the History of our Dutch War, 1665, which, with that which followed it into 1672, I wish I could see put together by your hand, as greatly suspecting they will prove the last instances of the sea actions of this nation, which will either bear telling at all, or be worthy of such an historian as Mr. Evelyn. Another piece of restitution I have to make you is your *Columna Trajani*, which, out of a desire of making the most use of, with the greatest care to my eyes, I put out unfortunately to an unskilful hand for the washing its prints with some thin stain to abate the too strong lustre of the paper ; in the execution whereof part of it suffered so much injury, that not knowing with what countenance to return it, I determined upon making you amends by the first fair book I could meet with ; but with so ill success, that notwithstanding all my industry, at auctions and otherwise, I have only been able to lay eye on one, fair or foul, at Scott's, and that wholly wanting the historical part ; Sir P. Lely, whose book it was, contenting himself with so much and no more, as touched the profession of a painter without that of a scholar.

I have, therefore, thought it more religious to restore so great a jewel as your own book, even with this damage.

S. P.

SAMUEL PEPYS TO MRS. STEWARD

[*A remarkable Wedding*]

September 20, 1695.

MADAM,—

You are very good, and pray continue so, by as many kind messages as you can, and notices of your health, such as the bearer brings you back my thanks for, and a thousand services. Here's a sad town, and God knows when it will be a better, our losses at sea making a very melancholy exchange at both ends of it; the gentlewomen of this (to say nothing of the other) sitting with their arms across, without a yard of muslin in their shops to sell, while the ladies, they tell me, walk pensively by, without a shilling, I mean a good one, in their pockets to buy. One thing there is, indeed, that comes in my ways as a Governor to hear of, which carries a little mirth with it, and indeed is very odd. Two wealthy citizens are lately dead, and left their estates, one to a Blue-Coat boy, and the other to a Blue-Coat girl, in Christ's Hospital. The extraordinariness of which has led some of the magistrates to carry it on to a match, which is ended in a public wedding; he in his habit of blue satin, led by two of the girls, and she in blue, with an apron green, and petticoat yellow, all of sarsnet, led by two of the boys of the house through Cheapside to Guildhall Chapel, where they were married by the Dean of St. Paul's, she given by my Lord Mayor. The wedding-dinner, it seems, was kept in the Hospital Hall; but the great day will be to-morrow, St. Matthew's, when, so much I am surc of, my Lord Mayor will be there, and myself also have had a ticket of invitation thither, and if I can will be there too; but for the other particulars I must refer you to my next, and so,

Dear Madam, adieu,

S. P.

Bow bells are just now ringing, ding dong, but whether for this, I cannot presently tell; but it is likely enough, for I have known them ring upon much foolisher occasions, and lately too.



SAMUEL PEPYS TO JOHN EVELYN

[*The Evening of his days*]

Clapham, August 7, 1700.

I have no herds to mind, nor will my doctor allow me any books here. What then, will you say too, are you doing? Why, truly, nothing that will bear naming, and yet I am not, I think, idle; for who can, that has so much of past and to come to think on as I have? And thinking, I take it, is working, though many forms beneath what my lady and you are doing. But pray remember what o'clock it is with you and me; and be not now, by over-stirring, too bold with your present complaint, any more than I dare be with mine, which too has been no less kind in giving me my warning, than the other to you, and to neither of us, I hope, and through God's mercy dare say, either unlooked for or unwelcome. I wish, nevertheless, that I were able to administer anything towards the lengthening that precious rest of life which God has thus long blessed you (and in you mankind) with; but I have always been too little regardful of my own health to be a prescriber to others. I cannot give myself the scope I otherwise should in talking now to you at this distance, on account of the care extraordinary I am now under from Mrs. Skinner's being suddenly fallen very ill; but ere long I may possibly venture at entertaining you with something from my young man in exchange—I don't say in payment—for the pleasure you gratify me with from yours, whom I pray God to bless with continuing but what he is! and I'll ask no more for him.

S. P.

JOHN EVELYN

1620—1706

It was John Evelyn who proposed to Robert Boyle the scheme which subsequently grew into the Royal Society, and in the following letter to Cowley he begs 'an ode from the best of poets' to silence some of the critics of the new association. Cowley's masterly poem on the subject was published before the close of the year in Sprat's *History of the Royal Society*. Evelyn had then been settled at Sayes Court, Deptford, for fourteen years, and did much to beautify the place, but only to have it desecrated when Peter the Great—a 'right nasty' tenant—rented it in 1698. Evelyn's letter to Lady Sunderland throws some interesting light on his *Sylvia*, or *A Discourse of Forest Trees*, which after his famous Diary is the best-known of his numerous works. His manuscript *History of the Dutch War*, mentioned in his letter to Pepys, has never been discovered.

## JOHN EVELYN TO ABRAHAM COWLEY

[*The Early Days of the Royal Society*]Sayes Court, *March* 12, 1667.

SIR,—

You had reason to be astonished at the presumption, not to name it affront, that I who have so highly celebrated Recess, and envied it in others, should become an advocate for the enemy, which of all others it abhors and flies from. I conjure you to believe that I am still of the same mind, and that there is no other person alive who does more honour and breathe after the life and repose you so happily cultivate and adorn by y<sup>r</sup> example. But as those who praised Dirt, a Flea, and the Gout,<sup>1</sup> so have I 'Publick Employment'<sup>2</sup> in that trifling Essay; and that in so weak a style compared to my antagonists, as by that alone it will appear I neither was nor could be serious; and I hope you believe I speak my very soul to you; but I have more to say which will require your kindness. Suppose our good friend were publishing some eulogies on the Royal Society, and by deducing the original, progress and advantages of their design would bespeak it some veneration in the world? Has Mr. Cowley no inspirations for it? Would it not hang the most heroic wreath about his temples? Or can he desire a nobler or a fuller argument either for the softest airs or the loudest echoes, for the smoothest or briskest strokes of his Pindaric lyre?

There be those who ask, What have the Royal Society done? Where their College? I need not instruct you how to answer or confound those persons, who are able to make even these inform Blocks and Stones dance into order, and charm them into better sense. Or, if their insolence press, you are capable to show how they have laid solid foundations to perfect all noble Arts, and reform all imperfect Sciences. It requires a History to recite only the Arts, the Inventions, the Phenomena already absolved, improved or opened. In a word our registers have outdone Pliny, Porta and Alexis, and all the experimentists, nay the great Verulam himself, and have made

<sup>1</sup> Scholars of those days appear to have relieved their serious studies with all manner of witticisms of this kind, both in prose and verse.

<sup>2</sup> Evelyn's Essay on '*Public Employment etc. preferred to solitude*'.—See Cowley's letter to Evelyn, p. 112.

a nobler and more faithful collection of real secrets, useful and instructive, than has hitherto been shown. Sir, we have a Library, a Repository, and an assembly of as worthy and great persons as the World has any; and yet we are sometimes the subject of satire and the songs of drunkenness; have a King to our founder and yet want a Mæcenas; and above all a spirit like yours to raise us up benefactors, and to compel them to think the designs of the Royal Society as worthy their regards, and as capable to embalm their names, as the most heroic enterprise, or any thing Antiquity has celebrated; and I am even amazed at the wretchedness of this age that acknowledges it no more. But the Devil, who was ever an enemy to truth, and to such as discover his prestigious effects, will never suffer the promotion of a design so destructive to his dominion, which is to fill the world with imposture and keep it in ignorance, without the utmost of his malice and contradiction. But you have numbers and charms that can bind even these spirits of darkness, and render their instruments obsequious; and we know you have a divine Hymn for us; the lustre of the Royal Society calls for an ode from the best of poets upon the noblest argument. To conclude, here you have a field to celebrate the great and the good, who either do, or should favour the most august and worthy design that ever was set on foot in the world; and those who are our real patrons and friends, you can eternize, those who are not you can conciliate and inspire to do gallant things. But I will add no more, when I have told you with very great truth, that I am, sir, etc.

JOHN EVELYN TO LADY SUNDERLAND

[*'A Discourse of Forest Trees'*]

Sayes Court, Deptford, *August 4, 1690.*

MADAM,—

As for the Calendar your Ladyship mentions, whatever assistance it may be to some novice gardener sure I am his Lordship will find nothing in it worth his notice but an old inclination to an innocent diversion, and the acceptance that it found with my dear (and while he lived) worthy friend Mr. Cowley, upon whose reputation only it has survived seven

impressions, and is now entering on the eighth with some considerable improvements, more agreeable to the present curiosity. 'Tis now, Madam, almost forty years since I writ it, when Horticulture was not much advanced in England, and near thirty since first 'twas published, which consideration will I hope excuse its many defects. If in the mean time it deserve the name of no unuseful trifle, 'tis all it is capable of.

When many years ago I came from rambling abroad, observed a little there, and a great deal more since I came home than gave me much satisfaction, and (as events have proved) scarce worth one's pursuit, I cast about how I should employ the time which hangs on most young men's hands, to the best advantage; and when books and severer studies grew tedious, and other impertinence would be pressing, by what innocent diversions I might sometimes relieve myself without compliance to recreations I took no felicity in, because they did not contribute to any improvements of the mind. This set me upon planting of Trees, and brought forth my *Sylva*, which booke, infinitely beyond my expectations, is now also calling for a fourth impression, and has been the occasion of propagating many millions of useful timber trees throughout this Nation, as I may justify (without immodesty) from the many letters of acknowledgment received from gentlemen of the first quality, and others altogether strangers to me. His late Majesty Charles II was sometimes graciously pleased to take notice of it to me, and that I had by that booke alone incited a world of planters to repair their broken estates and woods, which the greedy Rebels had wasted and made such havoc of. Upon this encouragement I was once speaking to a mighty man, then in despotic power, to mention the great inclination I had to serve his Majesty in a little office then newly vacant (the salary I think hardly £300) whose province was to inspect the Timber Treces in His Majesty's forests, etc., and take care of their culture and improvement; but this was conferred upon another, who, I believe had seldom been out of the smoke of London, where tho' there was a great deal of timber there were not many trees. I confess I had an inclination to the employment upon a public account as well as its being suitable to my rural genius, born as I was at Wotton among the Woods.

Soon after this, happened the direful conflagration of this

City, when taking notice of our want of books of Architecture in the English tongue, I published those most useful directions of ten of the best authors on that subject, whose works were very rarely to be had, all of them written in French, Latin or Italian and so not intelligible to our mechanics. What the fruit of that labour and cost had been (for the sculptures which are elegant were very chargeable) the great improvement of our workmen, and several impressions of the copy since, will best testify. In this method I thought properly to begin with planting trees, because they would require time for growth and be advancing to delight and shade at least, and were therefore by no means to be neglected and deferred, while building might be raised and finished in a summer if the owner pleased.

Thus, Madam, I endeavoured to do my countrymen some little service, in as natural an order as I could for the improving and adorning their estates and dwellings, and, if possible, make them in love with those useful and innocent pleasures in exchange of a wasteful and ignoble sloth which I had observed so universally corrupted an ingenious education.

JOHN EVELYN TO SAMUEL PEPYS

[*The Lost History of the Dutch War*<sup>1</sup>]

SIR,—

April 28, 1682.

Considering how far your laudable zeal still extends to all things that any way concern the actions of this nation at sea and that you despise not the least things that may possibly be of use, I make no scruple of sending you all my blotted fragments, which yet with no small pains you will find I had collected, in order to a further progress in the History of the Dutch War. I should be perfectly ashamed of the farrago, when I reflect upon the more precious materials you have amassed; but you know where Virgil found gold, and you will consider that these were only minutes and tumultuary hints relating to ampler pieces, infirm and unfit to be put into the building, but prepared to work on. It is not imaginable to those who have not tried, what labours an historian that would be exact is condemned to; he must read all, good and bad, and remove a world of rubbish before he can lay the

<sup>1</sup> Referred to in Pepys's letter to Evelyn, p. 102.



foundation. So far I had gone, and it was well for me I went no farther, and better for the reader on many accounts, as I am sure you find by what I have already been so weak as to show you ; and yet I cannot forbear. You will find, among the rest, in a little essay, how what I have written in English would show in Latin, ashamed as I was to see the history of that war published in that universal and learned language, and that in just and specious volumes, whilst we only told our tale to ourselves, and suffered the indignities of those who prepossessed the world to our prejudice ; and you know how difficult a thing it is to play an after-game, when men's minds are perverted and their judgments prepossessed. Our sloth and silence in this diffusive age, greedy of intelligence and public affairs, is a great fault, and I wonder our politicians that are at the helm take no more care of it, since we see what advantages reputation alone carries with it in Holland, Genoa, Venice, and even our East India Commission ; whereas, all wise men know they are neither so rich, wise, or powerful, intrinsically, and that it is the credit and estimation the vulgar has of them which renders them considerable. It was on this account I chose the action at Bergen ; not that I thought it to be the most glorious or discreet, for in truth I think much otherwise, but for that the exploit was entire, and because I had seen what the Dane had published in Latin much to our dishonour. How close I have kept to my text you will find by collation, and whether nervous and sound, none can better judge. That I did not proceed need not be told you. The peace was concluded ; my patron resigned his staff ; his successor was unkind and unjust to me. The Dutch Ambassador complained of my Treatise of Commerce and Navigation, which was intended but for a proclusion, and published by His Ma<sup>ty's</sup> encouragement before the peace was quite ratified, though not publicly till afterwards. In sum, I had no thanks for what I had done, and have been accounted since, I suppose, an useless fop, and fit only to plant coleworts, and I cannot bend to mean submissions ; and this, Sir, is the history of the Historian. I confess to you, I had once the vanity to hope, had my patron continued in his station, for some, at least, honorary title that might have animated my progress, as seeing then some amongst them whose talents I did not envy : but it was not my fortune to succeed. If I were a

young man, and had the vanity to believe any industry of mine might recommend me to the friendship and esteem of Mr. Pepys, as I take him to be of a more enlarged and generous soul, so I should not doubt but he would promote this ambition of mine, and not think one that would labour for the honour of his country, in my way, unworthy some regard. This almost prompts me to say the same to him that Joseph did to Pharaoh's exauctorated butler, whose restoration to grace he predicted,—*'Tantum memento mei cum bene tibi fuerit'*. And so farewell,

Dear Sir,  
J. E.

JOHN EVELYN TO SAMUEL PEPYS <sup>1</sup>

[*The Shadow of Death*]

Wotton, August 9, 1700.

The confirmation of your health under your own hand, and that I still live in your esteem, revives me. There could nothing come more welcome to me : it brings me the tenderest instances of your friendship, and what I shall ever value—your counsel. Indeed, I am not a little sensible that more thought, and less motion or stirring than usual, had been safer for me since I came hither. And though at present the indisposition under which I laboured be much abated, yet the apprehension of its return makes me take hold of your kindness in offering me the receipt of the barley water, and the method of preparing it. Meantime, be assured, I am not without those serious reflections you so christianly suggest. The scantiness, mutability, and little satisfaction of the things of this world, after all our researches in quest of something we think worth our pains, but are indeed the images only of what we pursue, warn me, so much nearer my period, that my sand runs lower than yours, that there is another and a better state of things which concerns us, and for which I pray God Almighty to prepare us both. Epictetus, *Enchirid.* cap. xii., has an excellent and useful illustration in order to this readiness. When the master of the vessel, says he, calls on board the passengers he set on shore to refresh a little, they should

<sup>1</sup> In answer to Pepys's letter, p. 104.

continually be mindful of the ship, and the master's summons, and leave their trifling and gathering cockle-shells, nay, all impertinencies whatsoever, mind the signal, and run to the ship. The warning is in general ; but if thou be a man in years, stray not too far, lest thou be left behind, and lose thy passage. This alarm, friend, is constantly in my thoughts, intent upon finishing a thousand impertinencies, which I fancy would render my habitation, my library, garden, collections, and the work I am about, complete : *at si Gubernator vocaverit ad Navem*, we must leave them all. Thus the Philosophers ; but we have better advice from the Divine Oracles, to be upon our watch and within call. Such was that, you know, which always sounded in St. Hierome's ears ; '*Surgite mortui et venite ad Judicium*,' and this gives check and allay to all the imaginary satisfactions we think to find in the things of this life. Let you and I, therefore, settle our necessary affairs, and pray we may not be surprised : an easy, comfortable passage, is that which remains for us to beg of God, and for the rest to sit loose to things below. I have, I thank God ! made my will since I came here, and look upon all other accessions with indifference ; and though I bait now and then upon an innocent diversion, and am not idle as to other improvements, *inutilis olim, ne videar vixisse*, let us both be ready to leave them when the Master calls. And with this meditation, by you so seasonably inculcated to your old friend, I return the most humble thanks of, Sir,

Your most obliged and faithful Friend,

J. EVELYN.

#### ABRAHAM COWLEY

1618—1667

WE owe it to Bishop Sprat—one of the scientific circle from which sprang the Royal Society—that the full correspondence of the 'melancholy Cowley' was suppressed. Sprat, who was Cowley's literary executor, and biographer, was determined, to borrow his own metaphor, that the soul of the poet should not appear undressed ; 'and the world has been defrauded of some of the tenderest and purest sentiments which ever flowed from a human heart'. Beloved by all his friends, Cowley was specially mourned at his death by John Evelyn, who says in his Diary : '1 Aug. (1667,) I received the sad news of Abr. Cowley's death ; that incomparable poet, and virtuous man, my very dear friend. 3. Went to Mr. Cowley's funeral ; his corps lay at Wallington House ; and was thence conveyed to

Westmr. Abbey in a hearse with 6 horses, and all funeral decency, neare a hundred coaches of noblemen and persons of qualitie following; among these all the wits of the towne, diver bishops and cleargymen. He was interred next Geffry Chaucer, and neare Spenser.' Isaac D'Israeli recovered the first of the letters now reprinted; the second appears in Evelyn's correspondence, and the third in the folio edition of Cowley's works.

ABRAHAM COWLEY TO JOHN EVELYN

[*The melancholy poet as a Gardener*]

Barn Elms, *March 23, 1663.*

SIR,—

There is nothing more pleasant than to see kindness in a person, for whom we have great esteem and respect: no, not the sight of your garden in May, or even the having such a one; which makes me more obliged to return you my most humble thanks for the testimonies I have lately received of you, both by your letter and your presents. I have already sowed such of your seeds as I thought most proper, upon a hot-bed; but cannot find in all my books a catalogue of these plants which require that culture, nor of such as must be set in pots; which defects, and all others, I hope shortly to see supplied, as I hope shortly to see your work of Horticulture finished and published; and long to be in all things your disciple as I am in all things now,

Sir, your most humble, and most obedient servant,  
A. COWLEY.

ABRAHAM COWLEY TO JOHN EVELYN

[*The Ode on the Royal Society*]

Chertsey, *May 13, 1667.*<sup>1</sup>

SIR,—

I am ashamed of the rudeness I have committed in deferring so long my humble thanks for your obliging letter, which I received from you at the beginning of the last month. My laziness in finishing the copy of verses upon the Royal Society, for which I was engaged before by Mr. Sprat's desire, and encouraged since by you, was the cause of this delay, having designed to send it to you enclosed in my letter; but I am told

<sup>1</sup> In answer to Evelyn's letter, p. 105.

now that the History is almost quite printed, and will be published so soon, that it were impertinent labour to write out that which you will so suddenly see in a better manner, and in the company of better things. I could not comprehend in it many of those excellent hints which you were pleased to give me, nor descend to the praises of particular persons, because those things afford too much matter for one copy of verses, and enough for a poem, or the History itself; some part of which have I seen, and think you will be very well satisfied with it. I took the boldness to show him your letter, and he says he has not omitted any of those heads, though he wants the eloquence in expression. Since I have the honour to receive from you the reply to a book written in praise of a solitary life,<sup>1</sup> I have sent all about the town in vain to get the author, having very much affection for the subject, which is one of the noblest controversies both modern and ancient; and you have dealt so civilly with your adversary as makes him deserve to be looked after. But I could not meet with him, the books being all, it seems, either burnt or bought up. If you please to do me the favour to lend it to me, and send it to my brother's house (that was) in King's Yard, it shall be returned to you within a few days with the humble thanks of your most faithful obedient servant,

A. COWLEY.

COWLEY TO MR. S. L.

[*The Danger of Procrastination*]

I am glad that you approve and applaud my design of withdrawing myself from all tumult and business of the world; and consecrating the little rest of my time to those studies, to which nature had so motherly inclined me, and from which fortune, like a step-mother, has so long detained me. But nevertheless (you say), which *But* is *æruugo mera*, a rust which spoils the good metal it grows upon. But (you say), you would advise me not to precipitate that resolution, but to stay a while longer with patience and complaisance, till I had gotten such an estate as might afford me (according to the saying of that person whom you and I love very much, and would be-

<sup>1</sup> Sir George Mackenzie's *Moral Essay upon Solitude, preferring it to Public Employment, &c.*, 1665.



lieve as soon as another man) *cum dignitate otium*. This were excellent advice to Joshua, who could bid the sun stay too. But there's no fooling with life when it is once turned beyond forty. The seeking for a fortune, then, is but a desperate after-game ; 'tis a hundred to one if a man fling two sixes and recover all, especially if his hand be no luckier than mine. There is some help for all the defects of fortune ; for if a man cannot attain to the length of his wishes, he may have remedy by cutting of them shorter. Epicurus writes a letter to Idomeneus (who was then a very powerful, wealthy, and, it seems, bountiful person), to recommend to him, who had made so many rich, one Pythocles, a friend of his, whom he desired might be made a rich man too ; ' but I entreat you that you would not do it just the same way as you have done to many less deserving persons, but in the most gentlemanly manner of obliging him, which is not to add anything to his estate, but to take something from his desires '. The sum of this is, that for the uncertain hopes of some conveniences, we ought not to defer the execution of a work that is necessary, especially when the use of those things which we would stay for may otherwise be supplied, but the loss of time never recovered. Nay, farther yet, though we were sure to obtain all that we had a mind to, though we were sure of getting never so much by continuing the game, yet when the light of life is so near going out, and ought to be so precious, *Le jeu ne vaut pas la chandelle*, the play is not worth the expense of the candle. After having been long tost in a tempest, if our masts be standing, and we have still sail and tackling enough to carry us to our port, it is no matter for the want of streamers and top-gallants. *Utere velis, Totos pande sinus*. A gentleman in our late civil wars, when his quarters were beaten up by the enemy, was taken prisoner, and lost his life afterwards only by staying to put on a band and adjust his periwig ; he would escape like a person of quality, or not at all, and died the noble martyr of ceremony and gentility. I think your counsel of *Festina lente* is as ill to a man who is flying from the world, as it would have been to that unfortunate, well-bred gentleman who was so cautious as not to fly undecently from his enemies ; and therefore I prefer Horace's advice before yours,

Begin ; the getting out of doors is the greatest part of the journey. Varro teaches us that Latin proverb,—*Portam itineri longissimam esse*. But to return to Horace,

—*Sapere aude,  
Incipe, vivendi qui recte prorogat horam,  
Rusticus expectat dum labitur amnis, at ille  
Labitur, & labetur in omne volubilis ævum.*

Begin, be bold, and venture to be wise ;  
He who defers this work from day to day,  
Does on a river's bank expecting stay,  
Till the whole stream which stopt him should be gone,  
That runs, and as it runs, for ever will run on.

Cæsar (the man of expedition above all others) was so far from this folly, that whensoever, in a journey, he was to cross any river, he never went one foot out of his way for a bridge, or a ford, or a ferry, but flung himself into it immediately, and swam over ; and this is the course we ought to imitate, if we meet with any stops in our way to happiness. Stay till the waters are low, stay till some boats come by to transport you, stay till a bridge be built for you ; you had better stay till the river be quite past. Persius (who you use to say, you do not know whether he be a good poet or no, because you cannot understand him, and whom therefore, I say, I know to be not a good poet) has an odd expression of these procrastinators, which, methinks, is full of fancy.

*Jam cras hesternum consumpsimus. Ecce aliud cras,  
Egerit hos annos.*—Pers. Sat. 5.

Our yesterday's to-morrow now is gone,  
And still a new to-morrow does come on ;  
We by to-morrows draw up all our store,  
Till the exhausted well can yield no more.

And now, I think I am even with you, for your *otium cum dignitate* and *Festina lente*, and three or four other more of your new Latin sentences ; if I should draw upon you all my forces out of Seneca and Plutarch upon this subject, I should overwhelm you ; but I leave those as *Triarii* for your next charge. I shall only give you now a light skirmish out of an epigrammatist, your special good friend, and so *vale*.

MART., LIB. 5, Ep. 59.

To-morrow you will live, you always cry ;  
 In what far country does this morrow lye,  
 That 'tis so mighty long ere it arrive ?  
 Beyond the *Indies* does this morrow live ?  
 'Tis so far-fetcht this morrow, that I fear  
 'Twill be both very old and very dear ;  
 To-morrow I will live, the fool does say,  
 To-day itselfs too late, the wise liv'd yesterday.

MART., LIB. 2, Ep. 90.

Wonder not, sir (you who instruct the town  
 In the true wisdom of the sacred gown),  
 That I make haste to live, and cannot hold  
 Patiently out, till I grow rich and old.  
 Life for delays and doubts no time does give,  
 None ever yet made haste enough to live.  
 Let him defer it, whose preposterous care  
 Omits himself, and reaches to his heir ;  
 Who does his father's bounded stores despise,  
 And whom his own too never can suffice.  
 My humble thoughts no glittering roofs require,  
 Or rooms that shine with aught but constant fire.  
 I well content the avarice of my sight  
 With the fair gildings of reflected light :  
 Pleasures abroad, the sport of nature yields  
 Her living fountains, and her smiling fields.  
 And then at home, what pleasure is't to see  
 A little cleanly chearful familie :  
 Which if a chaste wife crown, no less in her  
 Than fortune, I the golden mean prefer ;  
 Too noble, nor too wise, she should not be,  
 No, nor too rich, too fair, too fond of me ;  
 Thus let my life slide silently away,  
 With sleep all night, and quiet all the day.

## JOHN LOCKE

1632-1704

Locke's letters reveal the lovable nature of the grave philosopher who approached the most awful speculations—to quote the words of James Hogg, the Ettrick Shepherd—‘as if he were about to handle the properties of triangles’. Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, which was his first public acknowledgment of authorship—his earlier contributions having been issued anonymously—did not appear until he was nearly fifty-eight, about twelve months after receiving the offer of the diplomatic post which he so modestly declines in the letter to Lord Mordaunt, dated February 21, 1689. His courtly letter to Lady Calverley, it is worth noticing, was written when he was seventy-one.

## JOHN LOCKE TO HIS FATHER

*[The letter of a devoted son]*

MOST DEAR AND EVER LOVING FATHER,—

I did not doubt but that the noise of a very dangerous sickness here would reach you, but I am alarmed with a more dangerous disease from Pensford, and were I as secure of your health as (I thank God) I am of my own, I should not think myself in danger ; but I cannot be safe so long as I hear of your weakness, and that increase of your malady upon you, which I beg that you would, by the timely application of remedies, endeavour to remove. Dr. Meary has more than once put a stop to its encroachment ; the same skill, the same means, the same God to bless you, is left still. Do not, I beseech you, by that care you ought to have of yourself, by that tenderness I am sure you have of us, neglect your own and our safety too ; do not, by a too pressing care for your children, endanger the only comfort they have left. I cannot distrust that Providence which hath conducted us thus far, and if either your disappointments or necessities shall reduce us to a narrower condition than you could wish, content shall enlarge it ; therefore, let not these thoughts distress you. There is nothing that I have which can be so well employed as to his use, from whom I first received it ; and if your convenience can leave me nothing else, I shall have a head, and hands, and industry still left me, which alone have been able to raise sufficient fortunes. Pray, Sir, therefore, make your life as comfortable and lasting as you can ; let not any consideration of us cast you into the least despondency. If I have any reflections on, or desires of, free and competent subsistence, it is more in reference to another (whom you may guess) to whom I am very much obliged, than for myself ; but no thoughts, how important soever, shall make me forget my duty ; and a father is more than all other relations ; and the greatest satisfaction I can propose to myself in the world is my hopes that you may yet live to receive the return of some comfort, for all that care and indulgence you have placed in,

Sir, your most obedient son,

J. L.

JOHN LOCKE TO LORD MORDAUNT (AFTERWARDS EARL OF  
PETERBOROUGH)

*[Declining the offer of a post as Envoy at one of the great German Courts]*

Whitehall, February 21, 1689.

MY LORD,—

I cannot but in the highest degree be sensible of the great honour his Majesty has done me in those gracious intentions towards me which I have understood from your Lordship ; and it is the most touching displeasure I have ever received from that weak and broken constitution of my health which has so long threatened my life, that it now affords me not a body suitable to my mind in so desirable an occasion of serving his Majesty. I make account every Englishman is bound in conscience and gratitude not to content himself with a bare, slothful, and inactive loyalty, where his purse, his head, or his hand, may be of any use to this our great deliverer. He has ventured and done too much for us to leave room for indifferency or backwardness in any one who would avoid the reproach and contempt of all mankind. And if with the great concerns of my country and all Christendom, I may be permitted to mix so mean a consideration as my own private thoughts, I can truly say that the particular veneration I have for this person carries me beyond an ordinary zeal for his service.

Besides this, my Lord, I am not so ignorant as not to see the great advantages of what is proposed to me. There is honour in it enough to satisfy an ambition greater than mine, and a step to the making my fortune which I could not have expected. There are temptations that would not suffer me easily to decline so eminent a favour, as the others are obligations to a forward obedience in all things, where there are hopes it may not be unuseful. But such is the misfortune of my circumstances, that I cannot accept the honour that is designed me without rendering myself utterly unworthy of it. And however tempting it be, I cannot answer to myself or the world my embracing a trust which I may be in danger to betray even by my entering upon it. This I shall certainly be guilty of, if I do not give your Lordship a true account of myself, and what I foresee may



be prejudicial to his Majesty's affairs. My Lord, the post that is mentioned to me is at this time, if I mistake not, one of the busiest and most important in all Europe, and, therefore, would require not only a man of common sense and good intentions, but one whom experience in the methods of such business has fitted with skill and dexterity to deal with not only the reasons of able, but the more dangerous artifices of cunning men, that in such stations must be expected and mastered. But, my Lord, supposing industry and good-will would in time work a man into some degree of capacity and fitness, what will they be able to do with a body that hath not health and strength enough to comply with them ? What shall a man do in the necessity of application and variety of attendance on business to be followed there, who sometimes, after a little motion, has not breath to speak, and cannot borrow an hour or two of watching from the night without repaying it with a great waste of time the next day ? Were this a conjuncture wherein the affairs of Europe went smooth, or a little mistake in management would not be soon felt, but that the diligence or change of the Minister might timely enough recover it, I should perhaps think I might without being unpardonably faulty, venture to try my strength, and make an experiment so much to my advantage ; but I have a quite other view of the state of things at present, and the urgency of affairs comes on so quick, that there was never such need of successful diligence, and hands capable of despatch, as now.

The dilatory methods and slow proceedings, to say no worse of what I cannot without indignation reflect on in some of my countrymen, at a season when there is not a moment of time lost without endangering the Protestant and English interest throughout Europe, and which have already put things too far back, make me justly dread the thought that my weak constitution should in so considerable a post any way clog his Majesty's affairs ; and I think it much better that I should be laid by to be forgotten forever, than that they should at all suffer by my ambitiously and forwardly undertaking what my want of health or experience would not let me manage to the best advantage ; for I must again tell your Lordship, that however unable I might prove there will not be a time in this crisis to call me home and send another.

If I have reason to apprehend the cold air of the country,

there is yet another thing in it as inconsistent with my constitution, and that is, their warm drinking. I confess obstinate refusal may break pretty well through it, but that at best will be to take more care of my own health than the King's business. It is no small matter in such stations to be acceptable to the people one has to do with, in being able to accommodate one's self to their fashions; and I imagine whatever I may do there myself, the knowing what others are doing is at least one-half of my business, and I know no such rack in the world to draw out men's thoughts as a well managed bottle. If therefore it were fit for me to advise in this case, I should think it more for the King's interest to send a man of equal parts, that could drink his share, than the soberest man in the kingdom.

I beseech you, my Lord, to look on this, not as the discourse of a modest or lazy man, but of one who has truly considered himself, and, above all things, wishes well to the designs which his Majesty has so gloriously begun for the redeeming England, and with it all Europe, and I wish for no other happiness in this world, but to see it completed, and shall never be sparing of my mite where it may contribute any way to it; which I am confident your Lordship is sufficiently assured of, and therefore I beg leave to tell your Lordship that if there be anything wherein I may flatter myself I have attained any degree of capacity to serve his Majesty, it is in some little knowledge I perhaps may have in the constitutions of my country, the temper of my countrymen, and the divisions among them, whereby I persuade myself I may be more useful to him at home, though I cannot but see that such an employment would be of greater advantage to myself abroad would but my health consent to it.

My Lord, missing your Lordship, at your lodging this morning, I have taken the liberty to leave you my thoughts in writing, being loth that in anything that depends on me there should be a moment's delay, a thing which at this time I look on as so criminal in others.

I am, my Lord,

Your Lordship's most humble and most obedient servant,

J. LOCKE.

JOHN LOCKE TO JOHN WYNNÉ

[*'The Essay concerning Human Understanding'*]

Oates, February 3, 1694-5.

SIR,—

You cannot think it strange that I should be surprised at the receipt of a letter of so much civility to me from a person I had not the honour to know, and of so great commendation of my book from a place where I thought it little taken notice of; and though the compliments you are pleased to bestow both on me and it are above what belongs to either, yet I cannot but acknowledge myself sensibly obliged by the kind thoughts you are biassed with in favour both of me and my essay. It having been begun by chance, and continued with no other design but a free inquiry into the subject, it would have been great vanity in me to publish it with hopes, that what had been writ for the diversion of my idle hours, should be made serious business of studious men who know how to employ their time. Those who had leisure to throw away in speculations a little out of the road, I guessed might perhaps look into it. If by the credit and recommendation of those who, like you, have entertained with a favourable opinion, it be read further, and get into the hand of men of letters and study, it is more than I could expect from a Treatise I writ in a plain and popular style, which, having in it nothing of the air of learning, nor so much of the language of the schools, was little suited to the use or relish of those who, as teachers or learners, applied themselves to the mysteries of scholastic knowledge.

But you, I see, are got above fashion and prejudice; and you must give me leave to have no ordinary thoughts of a man, who, by those two great opposers of all new efforts of improvement, will not suffer yourself to be hindered from contriving how to make the way to real knowledge more open and easy to those beginners who have set their faces that way. I should be very glad if anything in my book could be made useful to that purpose.<sup>1</sup> I agree with you, that most of

<sup>1</sup> John Wynne, who was the first to recommend the *Essay on Human Understanding* at Oxford University, had written to suggest that it would be useful to publish an abridgment of the book.

the larger explications may be looked on as incidental to what you design, and so may by one, who would out of my book make a system of the third part in my division of science, be wholly passed by or but lightly touched on ; to which let me add that several of those repetitions, which for reasons then I let it go with, may be omitted, and all the parts contracted into that form and bigness you propose.

But with my little health, and less leisure, considering that I have been so long a stranger to systems, and am utterly ignorant what would suit those you design it for, it is not for me to go about it, though what you have said would incline me to believe it might not be wholly lost labour. It is not for nothing I hope that this thought is fallen into the mind of one who is much abler to execute it ; you, I see, are as much master of my notions as I myself, and better able to put them together to the purpose you intend. I say not this to decline giving my assistance, if you, in civility, think I can afford you any.

The *Abstract*, which was published, in French, in the Bibliothèque Universelle of 1688, will neither in its size or design answer the end you purpose ; but if the rough draught of it, which I think I have in English somewhere amongst my papers, may be of any use to you, you may command it, or whatever service I can do you in any kind ; for I am, with a very particular esteem and respect,

Sir, your most humble Servant.

JOHN LOCKE TO LADY CALVERLEY

[*A playful Philosopher*]

1703.

MADAM,—

Whatever reason you have to look on me, as one of the slow men of London, you have this time given me an excuse for being so ; for you cannot expect a quick answer to a letter, which took me up a good deal of time to get to the beginning of it. I turned, and turned it on every side ; looked at it again and again, at the top of every page ; but could not get into the sense and secret of it, till I applied myself to the middle.

You, madam, who are acquainted with all the skill and methods of the ancients, have not, I suppose, taken up with this hieroglyphical way of writing for nothing ; and since you were going to put into your letter things that might be the reward of the highest merit, you would, by this mystical intimation, put me into the way of virtue, to deserve them.

But whatever your ladyship intended, this is certain, that, in the best words in the world, you gave me the greatest humiliation imaginable. Had I as much vanity as a pert citizen, that sets up as a wit in his parish, you have said enough in your letter to content me ; and if I could be swoln that way, you have taken a great deal of pains to blow me up, and make me the finest gaudy bubble in the world, as I am painted by your colours. I know the emperors of the East suffer not strangers to appear before them, till they are dressed up out of their own wardrobes ; is it so too in the empire of wit ? and must you cover me with your own embroidery, that I may be a fit object for your thoughts and conversation ? This, madam, may suit your greatness, but doth not at all satisfy my ambition. He, who has once flattered himself with the hopes of your friendship, knows not the true value of things if he can content himself with these splendid ornaments.

As soon as I had read your letter, I looked in my glass, felt my pulse, and sighed ; for I found, in neither of those, the promises of thirty years to come. For at the rate I have hitherto advanced, and at the distance, I see, by this complimentary way of treatment, I still am, I shall not have time enough in this world to get to you. I do not mean to the place where you now see the pole elevated, as you say, 54 degrees. A post-horse, or a coach, would quickly carry me thither. But when shall we be acquainted at this rate ? Is that happiness reserved to be completed by the gossiping bowl at your granddaughter's lying-in ?

If I were sure that, when you leave this dirty place, I should meet you in the same star where you are to shine next, and that you would then admit me to your conversation, I might perhaps have a little more patience. But, methinks, it is much better to be sure of something, than to be put off to expectations of so much uncertainty. If there be different elevations of the pole here, that keep you at so great a distance from those who languish in your absence ; who knows



but, in the other world, there are different elevations of persons ?

And you, perhaps, will be out of sight, among the seraphims, while we are left behind in some dull planet. This the high flights of your elevated genius give us just augury of, whilst you are here. But yet, pray take not your place there before your time ; nor keep not us poor mortals at a greater distance than you need.

When you have granted me all the nearness that acquaintance and friendship can give, you have other advantages enough still to make me see how much I am beneath you. This will be only an enlargement of your goodness, without lessening the adoration due to your other excellences.

You seem to have some thoughts of the town again. If the parliament or the term, which draw some by the name and appearance of business ; or if company, and music meetings, and other such entertainments, which have the attractions of pleasure and delight, were of any consideration with you ; you would not have much to say for Yorkshire, at this time of the year. But these are no arguments to you, who carry your own satisfaction, and I know not how many worlds always about you. I would be glad you would think of putting all these up in a coach and bringing them this way.

For though you should be never the better ; yet there be a great many here that would, and amongst them

The humblest of your Ladyship's servants.

JOHN LOCKE.

## JOHN DRYDEN

1631-1700

DRYDEN'S letter to Dennis was written during the last decade of the poet's life—after he had been converted to Roman Catholicism and deprived of the Laureateship. We have more personal particulars of Dryden at this period—thanks to the accidental preservation of some of his correspondence—than at other times in his career. It was during his last ten years, that Dryden produced his translation of Virgil and his *Fables*. John Dennis was the rancorous critic who is remembered as one of the best abused men in English literature. 'It may be supposed', remarks Willmott in printing the following letter in 1839, 'that the admiration which Dennis professed for Dryden was sincerer than the flattery which the poet lavished upon the critic'. The most embittered enemy of Dennis was Pope, who, after various preliminary attacks, 'damned him to everlasting fame' in the *Dunciad*.

## JOHN DRYDEN TO JOHN DENNIS

[His '*Virgil*' and other matters]

March, 1693-4.

MY DEAR MR DENNIS,—

When I read a letter so full of my commendations as your last, I cannot but consider you as the master of a vast treasure, who having more than enough for yourself, are forc'd to ebb out upon your friends. You have indeed the best right to give them, since you have them in propriety ; but they are no more mine when I receive them, than the light of the moon can be allowed to be her own, who shines but by the reflexion of her brother. Your own poetry is a more powerful example, to prove that the modern writers may enter into comparison with the ancients, than any which Perrault could produce in France ; yet neither he, nor you, who are a better critick, can persuade me, that there is any room left for a solid commendation at this time of day, at least for me.

If I undertake the translation of Virgil, the little which I can perform will shew, at least, that no man is fit to write after him, in a barbarous modern tongue. Neither will his machines be of any service to a Christian poet. We see how ineffectually they have been try'd by Tasso, and by Ariosto. 'Tis using them too dully, if we only make devils of his gods : as if, for example, I would raise a storm, and make use of Æolus, with this only difference of calling him Prince of the air ; what invention of mine would there be in this ? or who would not see Virgil through me ; only the same trick play'd over again by a bungling juggler ? Boileau has well observed, that it is an easy matter in a Christian poem, for God to bring the Devil to reason. I think I have given a better hint for new machines in my preface to *Juvenal* ; where I have particularly recommended two subjects, one of King Arthur's conquest of the Saxons, and the other of the Black Prince in his conquest of Spain. But the Guardian Angels of Monarchies and Kingdoms are not to be touch'd by every hand : a man must be deeply conversant in the Platonick philosophy, to deal with them ; and therefore I may reasonably expect that no poet of our age will presume to handle those machines, for fear of discovering his own ignorance ; or if he should, he

might perhaps be ingrateful enough not to own me for his benefactor.

After I have confess'd thus much of our modern heroick poetry, I cannot but conclude with Mr. Rymer, that our English comedy is far beyond any thing of the Ancients : and notwithstanding our irregularities, so is our tragedy. Shakespeare had a genius for it ; and we know, in spite of Mr. Rymer, that genius alone is a greater virtue (if I may so call it) than all other qualifications put together. You see what success this learned critic has found in the world, after his blaspheming Shakespeare. Almost all the faults which he has discovered, are truly there ; yet who will read Mr——, or not read Shakespeare ? For my own part, I reverence Mr.——'s learning, but I detest his ill-nature and his arrogance. I, indeed, and such as I, have reason to be afraid of him, but Shakespeare has not. There is another part of poetry in which the English stand almost upon an equal foot with the ancients ; and 'tis that we call Pindaric, introduced, but not perfected, by our famous Mr. Cowley ; and of this, sir, you are certainly one of the greatest masters ; you have the sublimity of sense as well as sound, and know how far the boldness of a poet may lawfully extend. I could wish you would cultivate this kind of ode, and reduce it either to the same measure which Pindar used, or give new measures of your own : for, as it is, it looks like a vast tract of land, newly discovered ; the soil is wonderfully fruitful, but unmanured, overstocked with inhabitants, but almost all savages, without laws, arts, arms, or policy. I remember poor Nat. Lee, who was then upon the verge of madness, yet made a sober and witty answer to a bad poet, who told him, '*It was an easy thing to write like a madman*'. 'No', said he, '*'tis very difficult to write like a madman, but 'tis a very easy thing to write like a fool.*' Otway and he are safe by death from all attacks ; but we, poor poets militant, (to use Mr. Cowley's expression,) are at the mercy of wretched scribblers ; and when they cannot fasten upon our verses, they fall upon our morals, our principles of state and religion. For my principles of religion, I will not justify them to you : I know yours are far different. For the same reason I shall say nothing of my principles of state. I believe you in yours follow the dictates of your reason, as I in mine do those of my conscience. If I

thought myself in an error, I would retract it ; I am sure that I suffer for them ; and Milton makes even the devil say, that no creature is in love with pain. For my morals, betwixt man and man, I am not to be my own judge ; I appeal to the world if I have deceived or defrauded any man ; and for my private conversation, they who see me every day can be the best witnesses, whether or no it be blameless and inoffensive. Hitherto I have no reason to complain that men of either party shun my company. I have never been an impudent beggar at the doors of noblemen : my visits have indeed been too rare to be unacceptable ; and but just enough to testify my gratitude for their bounty, which I have frequently received, but always unasked, as themselves will witness.

I have written more than I needed to you on this subject ; for I dare say you justify me to your self. As for that which I first intended for the principal subject of this letter, which is my friend's passion and his design of marriage, on better consideration I have chang'd my mind : for having had the honour to see my dear friend Wycherly's letter to him on that occasion, I find nothing to be added or amended. But as well as I love Mr. Wycherly, I confess I love my self so well, that I will not shew how much I am inferior to him in wit and judgment, by undertaking anything after him. There is Moses and the Prophets in his council. Jupiter and Juno, as the poets tell us, made Tiresias their umpire in a certain merry dispute, which fell out in heaven betwixt them. Tiresias, you know, had been of both sexes, and therefore was a proper judge ; our friend Mr. Wycherly is full as competent an arbitrator : he has been a bachelor, and marry'd man, and is now a widower.

Virgil says of Ceneus,

Nunc vir, nunc fœmina, Ceneus,  
Rursus et in veterem fato revoluta figuram.

Yet I suppose he will not give any large commendations to his middle state : nor as the sailor said, will be fond after a ship-wrack to put to sea again. If my friend wil adventure after this, I can but wish him a good wind, as being his, and

My dear Mr. Dennis,

Your most affectionate and most faithful Servant,

JOHN DRYDEN,

## WILLIAM CONGREVE

1670-1729

CONGREVE, who contributed to Dryden's metrical versions of *Juvenal*, 1693, and *Virgil*, 1697, produced his last play during the year in which Dryden died. 'He quitted the stage early, and Comedy left it with him,' said the much-abused critic John Dennis—which gives a special point to the following lengthy letter, written to Dennis by Congreve himself on the subject of 'humour in our English writers'.

WILLIAM CONGREVE TO JOHN DENNIS

[On '*humour in our English writers*']

DEAR SIR,—

You write to me, that you have entertained yourself two or three days with reading several comedies of several authors; and your observation is, that there is more of humour in our English writers than in any of the other comic poets, ancient or modern. You desire to know my opinion, and at the same time my thought of that which is generally called humour in comedy.

I agree with you in an impartial preference of our English writers in that particular. But if I tell you my thoughts of humour, I must at the same time confess that what I take for true humour has not been so often written even by them as is generally believed, and some who have valued themselves, and have been esteemed by others for that kind of writing, have seldom touched upon it. To make this appear to the world would require a long and laboured discourse, and such as I neither am able nor willing to undertake. But such little remarks as may be contained within the compass of a letter, and such unpremeditated thoughts as may be communicated between friend and friend, without incurring the censure of the world, or setting up for a dictator, you shall have from me, since you have enjoined it.

To define humour, perhaps, were as difficult as to define wit; for, like that, it is of infinite variety. To enumerate the several humours of men, were a work as endless as to sum up their several opinions. And in my mind the *Quot homines tot sententiæ* might have been more properly interpreted of humour; since there are many men of the same opinion in many things, who are yet quite different in humours. But



though we cannot certainly tell what wit is, or what humour is, yet we may go near to show something which is not wit, or not humour, and yet often mistaken for both. . . . When a poet brings a character on the stage, committing a thousand absurdities, and talking impertinencies, roaring aloud, and laughing immoderately, on every, or rather upon no occasion ; this is a character of humour.

Is anything more common than to have a pretended comedy stuffed with such grotesque figures and farce-fools ? Things that either are not in nature, or if they are, are monsters, and births of mischance ; and consequently, as such, should be stifled, and huddled out of the way, like Sooterkins, that mankind may not be shocked with an appearing possibility of the degeneration of a God-like species. For my part, I am as willing to laugh as anybody, and as easily diverted with an object truly ridiculous ; but at the same time, I can never care for seeing things that force me to entertain low thoughts of my nature. I don't know how it is with others, but I confess freely to you, I could never look long upon a monkey without very mortifying reflections ; though I never heard anything to the contrary why that creature is not originally of a distinct species. As I don't think humour exclusive of wit, neither do I think it inconsistent with folly ; but I think the follies should be only such as men's humours may incline them to, and not follies entirely abstracted from both humour and nature.

Sometimes personal defects are misrepresented for humours. I mean, sometimes characters are barbarously exposed on the stage, ridiculing natural deformities, casual defects in the senses, and infirmities of age. Sure the poet must both be very ill-natured himself, and think his audience so, when he proposes, by showing a man deformed, or deaf, or blind, to give them an agreeable entertainment ; and hopes to raise their mirth by what is truly an object of compassion. But much need not be said upon this head to anybody, especially to you, who in one of your letters to me concerning Mr. Jonson's '*Fox*', have justly excepted against this immoral part of ridicule in Corbaccio's character ; and there I must agree with you to blame him, whom otherwise I cannot enough admire, for his great mastery in true humour in comedy. . . .

The character of Morose in the *Silent Woman*, I take to be

a character of humour. And I choose to instance this character to you, from many others of the same author, because I know it has been condemned by many as unnatural and farcc; and you have yourself hinted some dislike of it, for the same reason, in a letter to me concerning some of Jonson's plays.

Let us suppose Morose to be a man naturally splenetic and melancholy: is there anything more offensive to one of such a disposition, than noise and clamour? Let any man that has the spleen (and there are enough in England) be judge. We see common examples of this humour in little every day. 'Tis ten to one but three parts in four of the company that you dine with are discomposed and startled at the cutting of a cork, or scratching a plate with a knife. It is a proportion of the same humour, that makes such or any other noise offensive to the person that hears it; for there are others who will not be disturbed at all by it. Well; but Morose, you will say, is so extravagant, he cannot bear any discourse or conversation above a whisper. Why, it is his excess of this humour that makes him become ridiculous, and qualifies his character for comedy. If the poet had given him but a moderate proportion of that humour, 'tis odds but half the audience would have sided with the character, and have condemned the author for exposing a humour which was neither remarkable nor ridiculous. Besides, the distance of the stage requires the figure represented to be something larger than the life; and sure a picture may have features larger in proportion, and yet be very like the original. If this exactness of quantity were to be observed in wit, as some would have it in humour, what would become of those characters that are designed for men of wit? I believe if a poet should steal a dialogue of any length from the extempore discourse of the two wittiest men upon earth, he would find the scene but coldly received by the town. But to the purpose:

The character of Sir John Daw in the same play is a character of affectation. He everywhere discovers an affectation of learning; when he is not only conscious to himself, but the audience also plainly perceives that he is ignorant. Of this kind are the characters of Thraso in the *Eunuch* of Terence, and Pyrgopolinices in the *Miles Gloriosus* of Plautus: they affect to be thought valiant, when both themselves and the

audience know they are not. Now such a boasting of valour in men who were really valiant, would undoubtedly be a humour; for a fiery disposition might naturally throw a man into the same extravagance, which is only affected in the characters I have mentioned.

The character of Cob in *Every Man in his Humour*, and most of the under characters in *Bartholomew Fair*, discover only a singularity of manners, appropriated to the several educations and professions of the persons represented. They are not humours, but habits contracted by custom. Under this head may be ranged all country clowns, sailors, tradesmen, jockeys, gamesters, and such like, who make use of cants or peculiar dialects in their several arts and vocations. One may almost give a receipt for the compositions of such a character; for the poet has nothing to do but to collect a few proper phrases and terms of art, and to make the person apply them by ridiculous metaphors in his conversation with characters of different natures. Some late characters of this kind have been very successful; but in my mind they may be painted without much art or labour, since they require little more than a good memory and superficial observation. But true humour cannot be shown without a dissection of nature, and a narrow search to discover the first seeds from whence it has its root and growth. . . .

I don't doubt but you have observed several men laugh when they are angry; others who are silent; some that are loud: yet I cannot suppose that it is the passion of anger which is in itself different, or more or less in one than t'other; but that it is the humour of the man that is predominant, and urges him to express it in that manner. Demonstrations of pleasure are as various: one man has a humour of retiring from all company, when anything has happened to please him beyond expectation; he hugs himself alone, and thinks it an addition to the pleasure to keep it secret. Another is upon thorns till he has made proclamation of it; and must make other people sensible of his happiness, before he can be so himself. So it is in grief and other passions. Demonstrations of love, and the effects of that passion upon several humours, are infinitely different: but here the ladies, who abound in servants, are the best judges. Talking of the ladies, methinks something should be observed of the humour of the fair sex,

since they are sometimes so kind as to furnish out a character for comedy. But I must confess, I have never made any observation of what I apprehend to be true humour in women. Perhaps passions are too powerful in that sex to let humour have its course, or maybe, by reason of their natural coldness, humour cannot exert itself to that extravagant degree which it often does in the male sex : for if ever anything does appear comical or ridiculous in a woman, I think it is little more than an acquired folly or an affectation. We may call them the weaker sex ; but I think the true reason is, because our follies are stronger, and our faults are more prevailing. . . .

There is infinitely more to be said on this subject, tho' perhaps I have already said too much ; but I have said it to a friend, who, I am sure, will not expose it if he does not approve of it. I believe the subject is entirely new, and was never touched upon before ; and if I would have any one to see this private essay, it should be some one who might be provoked by my errors in it to publish a more judicious treatise on the subject. Indeed I wish it were done, that the world being a little acquainted with the scarcity of true humour, and the difficulty of finding and showing it, might look a little more favourably on the labours of them who endeavour to search into nature for it, and lay it open to the public view.

I don't say but that very entertaining and useful characters, and proper for comedy, may be drawn from affectations, and those other qualities which I have endeavoured to distinguish from humour ; but I would not have such imposed on the world for humour, nor esteemed of equal value with it. It were perhaps the work of a long life to make one comedy true in all its parts, and to give every character in it a true and distinct humour. Therefore every poet must be beholden to other helps, to make out his number of ridiculous characters. But I think such a one deserves to be broke who makes all false musters ; who does not show one true humour in a comedy, but entertains his audience to the end of the play with everything out of nature.

I will make but one observation to you more, and I have done ; and that is grounded upon an observation of your own, and which I mentioned at the beginning of my letter, viz. that there is more of humour in our English comic writers

than in any others. I do not at all wonder at it, for I look upon humour to be almost of English growth ; at least it does not seem to have found such increase on any other soil ; and what appears to me to be the reason of it, is the great freedom, privilege, and liberty which the common people of England enjoy. Any man that has a humour, is under no restraint or fear of giving it vent : they have a proverb among them, which maybe will show the bent and genius of the people as well as a longer discourse : he that will have a May-pole shall have a May-pole. This is a maxim with them, and their practice is agreeable to it. I believe something considerable too may be ascribed to their feeding so much on flesh, and the grossness of their diet in general. But I have done, let the physicians agree that. Thus you have my thoughts of humour to my power of expressing them in so little time and compass. You will be kind to show me wherein I have erred ; and as you are very capable of giving me instruction, so I think I have a very just title to demand it from you ; being, without reserve, your real friend and humble servant,

W. CONGREVE.





### *PART III*

## The Age of Pope, Swift, the Novelists, and Dr Johnson

DANIEL DEFOE—JONATHAN SWIFT—LORD BOLINGBROKE  
—JOHN GAY—ALEXANDER POPE—RICHARD STEELE  
—JOSEPH ADDISON—COLLEY CIBBER—SAMUEL RICHARD-  
SON—WILLIAM SHENSTONE—LADY MONTAGU—LORD  
CHESTERFIELD—DR. JOHNSON—JAMES BOSWELL—HENRY  
FIELDING—LAURENCE STERNE—DAVID HUME—THOMAS  
GRAY—HORACE WALPOLE—THOMAS CHATTERTON—  
TOBIAS SMOLLETT—OLIVER GOLDSMITH



## DANIEL DEFOE

1661 (?)–1731

DEFOE had only been out of Newgate some six months when he wrote the following letter to Harley, at whose instigation he had obtained his release. He had suffered over twelve months' imprisonment for his famous treatise, *The shortest way with the Dissenters*, when Harley, coming into office upon the resignation of the Earl of Nottingham, sent his message to Defoe to inquire whether he could be of any service to him, and received the characteristic reply—'Lord, that I may receive my sight'. From this time—to quote Defoe's own words in excuse of his political inconsistencies—'although at heart a Whig, I was constantly obliged to serve a Tory ministry'. According to Walter Wilson, who printed the first of our Defoe letters in his *Memoirs of Defoe* (1830), the released pamphleteer 'was appointed by Harley to execute some mission of a secret nature, which required his presence upon the continent'. William Lee however—in his later life of Defoe—shows that Defoe could not have been on the continent at the time in question; the word 'abroad' was only used as the equivalent of 'from home'. Lee's explanation is 'that pecuniary difficulties compelling Defoe to leave London *incognito*, his friend Harley commissioned him to visit the south-western counties, containing a multitude of small boroughs, and to promote, by all honourable means, the election of such candidates as would support the Ministry in the new House of Commons'. Later in the same year Defoe was sent on another secret mission—this time to Scotland, to help in the negotiations for the political union of Scotland and England. His letter to J. Dyer, written five years later, throws a curious side-light on the pen and ink war waged by the politicians of the period. Defoe was then living at Stoke Newington in comfortable circumstances, preparing some works for the Press and writing his *Review*—the journal which he had started during his imprisonment at Newgate. Dyer was engaged in similar work for the Tories, and Defoe entered into a truce with him to prevent the introduction of personal reflections into their writings—'thus we may differ still, and yet preserve the Christian and the gentleman'. It was not until nine years later that Defoe published the first volume of *Robinson Crusoe*. Henceforth his work belonged to literature rather than to journalism.

DANIEL DEFOE TO SECRETARY HARLEY, AFTERWARDS EARL OF  
OXFORD

[*A Mysterious Mission, and a Scheme for a 'Secret Intelligence'  
Office*]

SIR,—

1705.

I cannot but retain a very deep sense of the candour and

goodness with which you received me last night. The particulars, Sir, admitt of no epithets to illustrate them: it remains to me onely to tender you all the acknowledgement of a grateful temper highly obliged. Persuant, Sir, to the plainness I have your leave to use, the enclosed papers are written for your perusall. They are observations from the discourse of the town on the affair of the fleet; 'tis an unhappy subject, and I assure you, there is much less than is discoursed on that head. I have onely one thing to premise, and which I entreat you to believe of me, that I have no manner of personall design as to Sir George R——: I neither kno' him, nor am concerned with him, or with any that does kno' him, directly or indirectly. I have not the least respect for him, or any personal prejudice, on any account whatsoever. I hope you will please to give full credit to me in this, otherwise it would be very rude and presuming to offer you the paper. I am preparing with joy to execute your commands for Thursday next, and furnishing myself with horses, etc., and entreat the liberty, since the time is short and I cannot expect to see you often, of troubling you the more with my visits of this sort, and fill you with my short requests. First, Sir, that you will be pleased to order the letter of leave for Mr. *Christopher Hurt*<sup>1</sup> to be absent on his private affaires for two months or more. That you will please to think of some instruccons for my speciall conduct; and whether it may not be proper for me to have something about me like a certificate, pass, or what you think fit, to prevent being questioned, searcht, or detained, by any accident, which often happens on the road; the nature and manner of such a thing I remit to your judgement. It will be very necessary that it should be provided against the impertinence of a country justice. The poem, Sir, of the Diet of Poland,<sup>2</sup> I omitted to mension to you last night; but certainly 'twill be very necessary to carry into the country with me; and as I am sure of its being very usefull, I cannot but importune you to let me perfect it, and turn it abroad into the world. I expect strange effects from it as to the house. The other papers which I purpose to furnish, I referr with the license to

<sup>1</sup> Probably a name he assumed for the occasion.

<sup>2</sup> A satire attacking the High Church party and praising the Whigs. Defoe used this in the country during the elections which began in May, 1705.



send you per post : Particularly some notes relating to the Parliament, and a scheme of an office for secret intelligence, at home and abroad. This last, as I kno' you are not ignorant of the vallue, the magnitude, and necessity of the design, with the want of such a thing in this nation, so I shall take mine, while I am abroad, to finish a perfect scheme, and such a one as I hope you will approve, and put in practice ; that, if possible, the affaires of all Europe may lye constantly before you in a true light, and you may kno' what is a doeing all over Europe, even before 'tis a doeing ; and in this weighty particular, go beyond all that ever were in that place before you. I confess, Sir, I had the enclosed papers in my pocket when I was with you, but was unwilling to rob myself of so much of your obliging conversation as to produce them. I commit them to your serious thoughts as a subject (pardon me if I think amiss) not at all trivial, and at present much wisht for in the nation. When I, Sir, take the freedom to lay any of these things before you, 'tis for you to judge from as you think fit ; I hope you will not find me assuming either a positive determination, or so much as arguing absolutely ; I may mistake, the whole town may mistake ; though in this case I doubt they do not. However, I am forward to lay such things before you, because I cannot but think 'tis necessary you should kno' in this, as well as anything else, what the people say.

I am, sir,

Your most obedient, etc.

DANIEL DEFOE TO THE EARL OF HALIFAX.<sup>1</sup>

*[Engages himself to Halifax as a political writer]*

*April 5, 1705.*

MY LORD,—

I most humbly thank your Lordship for expressions of your favour and goodness, which I had as little reason to expect from your lordship as I have capassity to merit.

My Lord Treasurer has frequently express'd himself with concern on my behalf, and Mr. Secretary Harley the like ; but I, my Lord, am like the Cripple at the Pool ; when the moment happen'd, no man was at hand to put the wretch

<sup>1</sup> Charles Montague, first Earl of Halifax (1661-1715).

into the water ; and my talent of sollicitation is absolutely a Cripple, and unqualified to help itself.

I wish your Lordship could understand by my imperfect expression the sense I have of your unexpected goodness in mentioning me to my Lord Treasurer. I could be very well pleased to wait till your merit and the Nation's want of you shall place your Lordship in that part of the Publick affaires, where I might owe any benefitt I shall receive from it, to your goodness, and might be able to act something for your service, as well as that of the Publick. My Lord, the proposall your Lordship was pleas'd to make by my brother the bearer, is exceeding pleasant to me to perform, as well as usefull to be done, agreeable to every thing the masterly genius of your Lordship has produc'd in this age ; but my missfortune is, the bearer, whose head is not that way, has given me so imperfect an account, that makes me your Lordship's most humble petitioner for some hints to ground my observations upon. I was wholly ignorant of the design of that act, not knowing it had such a noble originall.

Pardon my importunate application to your Lordship for some hints of the substance and design of that act, and if your Lordship please the names again of some books which my dull messenger forgott, and which your Lordship was pleas'd to to say had spoke to this head. I the rather press your Lordship on this head, because the very next article which of course I proposed to enter upon in the *Review* being that of paper credit, I shall at once do myself the honour to obey your Lordship's dictate, and observe the stated order of the discourse I am upon. I shall not presume to offer it against your Lordship's opinion, and would be farthest of all from exposing your Lordship to any tongues ; but if ever your Lordship shall think this despicable thing, who scorn'd to come out of Newgate at the price of betraying a dead Master, or discovering those things which nobody would have been the worse for, fitt to be trusted in your presence, tho' never so much incognito, he will certainly, exclusive of what he may communicate to your Lordship for the publick service, receive from you such instructions as are suitable to your known genius, and the benefitt of the Nation.

I have herewith sent your Lordship another book ; I know your Lordship has but a few minutes to spare, but I am your

Lordship's humble petitioner, to bestow an hour on its contents, because it is likely to make some noise in the world, and perhaps to come before your Lordship in Parliament.

I forbear to divert your more serious thoughts, which particulars I humbly thank your Lordship for the freedom of access you were pleas'd to give my messenger, and am extreemly ambitious of listing myself under your Lordship, in that cause, in which your Lordship was allwayes embarkt, viz., of Truth and Liberty.

I am,

May it please your Lordship,

Your Lordship's

Most humble and obed<sup>t</sup> Serv<sup>t</sup>,

D. FOE.

DANIEL DEFOE TO J. DYER

[*A Journalistic Truce*]

Newington, June 17, 1710.

MR. DYER,—

I have your letter. I am rather glad to find you put it upon the trial who was the aggressor, than justify a thing which I am sure you cannot approve; and in this I assure you I am far from injuring you, and refer you to the time when long since you had wrote: *I was fled from justice: one Sammon being taken up for printing a libel, and I being then on a journey,* nor the least charge against me for being concerned in it by anybody but your letter; also many unkind personal reflections on me in your letter, *when I was in Scotland, on the affair of the Union*, and I assure you when my paper had not in the least mentioned you, and those I refer to time and date for the proof of. I mention this only in defence of my last letter, in which I said no more in it than to let you see I did not merit such treatment, and could neverthelss be content to render any service to you, tho' I thought myself hardly used.

But to state the matter fairly between you and I, *a writing for different interests*, and so possibly coming under an unavoidable necessity of jarring in several cases: I am ready to make a fair truce of honour with you (viz.) that if what either party

are doing, or say, that may clash with the party we are for and urge us to speak, it shall be done without naming either's name, and without personal reflections; and thus we may differ still, and yet preserve the Christian and the gentleman.

This, I think, is an offer may satisfy you. I have not been desirous of giving just offence to you, neither would I to any man however I may differ from him; and I see no reason why I should affront a man's person because I do not join with him in principle. I please myself with being the first proposer of so fair a treaty with you, because I believe, as you cannot deny its being very honourable, so it is not less so in coming first from me, who, I believe, could convince you of my having been the first and the most ill-treated—for further proof I refer you to your letters, *at the time I was threatened with by the Envoy of the King of Sweden*. However, Mr. Dyer, this is a method which may end what is past, and prevent what is future; and if refused, the future part I am sure cannot lye at my door. . . . Wishing you success in all things (*your opinions of Government excepted*),

I am, your humble servant,

DE FOE.

DANIEL DEFOE (IN HIDING) TO HIS SON-IN-LAW, HENRY BAKER <sup>1</sup>

[*A dying request*]

About two miles from Greenwich, Kent, Tuesday, Aug. 12,  
1730.

DEAR MR. BAKER,—

I have your very kind and affectionate letter of the first, but not come to my hand until the tenth; where it had been delayed I know not. As your kind manner, and kinder thought from which it flows (for I take all you say to be as I always believed you to be, sincere and Nathaniel-like, without guile), was a particular satisfaction to me; so the stop of a letter, however it happened, deprived me of that cordial too many days, considering how much I stood in need of it, to support a mind sinking under the weight of an affliction too heavy for my strength, and looking on myself as abandoned

<sup>1</sup> Henry Baker, F.R.S., naturalist and poet, married Defoe's third daughter in 1729.

of every comfort, every friend, and every relative, except such only as are able to give me no assistance. I was sorry you should say at the beginning of your letter you were debarred seeing me. Depend upon my sincerity for this. I am far from debarring you. On the contrary, it would be a greater comfort to me than any I now enjoy, that I could have your agreeable visits with safety, and could see both you and my dearest Sophia, could it be without giving her the grief of seeing her father *in tenebris*, and under the load of insupportable sorrows. I am sorry I must open my griefs so far as to tell her, that it is not the blow I received from a wicked, perjured, and contemptible enemy, that has broken in upon my spirit; which, as she well knows, has carried me on through greater disasters than these. But it has been the injustice, unkindness, and, I must say, inhuman dealing of my own son,<sup>1</sup> which has both ruined my family, and, in a word, has broken my heart; and, as I am at this time under a weight of heavy illness, which I think will be a fever, I take this occasion to vent my grief in the breasts of those who I know will make a prudent use of it, and tell you, that nothing but this has conquered, or could conquer me. *Et tu quoque, Brute!* I depended upon him; I trusted him; I gave up my two dear unprovided children into his hands; but he has no compassion, and suffers them, and their poor dying mother, to beg their bread at his door, and to crave, as if it were an alms, what he is bound under hand and seal, besides the most sacred promises, to supply them with; himself, at the same time, living in a profusion of plenty. It is too much for me; excuse my infirmity—I can say no more—my heart is too full. I only ask one thing of you, as a dying request: stand by them when I am gone, and let them not be wronged, while he is able to do them right. Stand by them as a brother; and if you have anything within you owing to my memory, who have bestowed upon you the best gift I had to give, let them not be injured and trampled on by false pretences, and unnatural reflections. I hope they will want no help but that of comfort and counsel; but that they will, indeed, want, being too easy to be managed by words and promises.

It adds to my grief, that it is so difficult to me to see you.

<sup>1</sup> Defoe's second son Benjamin.



I am at a distance from London, in Kent ; nor have I a lodging in London ; nor have I been at that place in the Old Bailey, since I wrote to you I was removed from it. At present I am weak, having had some fits of a fever that have left me low, but those things much more. I have not seen son or daughter, wife or child, many weeks, and know not which way to see them. They dare not come by water, and by land there is no coach : and I know not what to do.

It is not possible for me to come to Enfield, unless you could find a retired lodging for me, where I might not be known<sup>1</sup> and might have the comfort of seeing you both, now and then : upon such a circumstance, I could gladly give the days to solitude, to have the comfort of an half hour, now and then, with you both for two or three weeks. But just to come and look at you, and retire immediately, it is a burden too heavy. The parting will be a price beyond the enjoyment. I would say (I hope) with comfort that it is yet well I am so near my journey's end, and am hastening to the place where the weary are at rest, and where the wicked cease to trouble ; be it that the passage is rough, and the day stormy. By what way soever He please to bring me to the end of it, I desire to finish life with this temper of soul in all cases : *Te Deum laudamus*. I congratulate you on the occasion of your happy advance in your employment. May all you do be prosperous, and all you meet with pleasant ; and may you both escape the torture and troubles of uneasy life. May you sail the dangerous voyage of life with a *forcing wind*, and make the port of heaven *without a storm*. It adds to my grief, that I must never see the pledge of your mutual love, my little grandson. Give him my blessing, and may he be to you both your joy in youth and your comfort in age, and never add a sigh to your sorrow. But alas ! that is not to be expected. Keep my dear Sophy once more for me ; and if I must see her no more, tell her this is from a father that loved her above all his comforts, to his last breath.

Your unhappy

DANIEL DEFOE.

<sup>1</sup> Defoe spent his last days in hiding—why, it has never been satisfactorily explained. He died at a lodging in Moorfields on April 26, 1731.

## JONATHAN SWIFT

1667-1745

ONLY one letter has been chosen for the present collection from Swift's *Journal to Stella*, a more representative selection being reserved for another work which we have in preparation. Whether Swift married 'Stella' (Esther Johnson) or not is a question which still remains unsettled, but both his *Journal* and his letters to intimate friends show that he was devoted to her to her dying day; and when his own death came, seventeen years later, he was buried by her side in St. Patrick's, Dublin. The tragedy described in the letter to 'Stella' now reprinted, was the famous duel between the fourth Duke of Hamilton and the notorious Lord Mohun, dicer, brawler and duellist, who nine years previously had been tried by his peers as an accomplice in the murder of the actor, William Mountford. The next letter in the following selection was written three years earlier, when Swift had hopes of preferment at the hands of Lord Halifax. William III, as Swift points out in his postscript, had promised him a prebend of Westminster through Sir William Temple, but Temple died before a vacancy occurred, and Swift received instead a prebend of St. Patrick's, Dublin, where he became dean in 1713. His bitter disappointment at having to stay in that 'cursed, factious, oppressed, miserable country' is shown in his letter to the Earl of Oxford, written eight years before the writer's death. This letter is also interesting for its references to Swift's party-history, the *Four Last Years of Queen Anne's Reign*, and the quarrels between the first Earl of Oxford and Lord Bolingbroke, in 1713-14, when Bolingbroke succeeded in ousting Oxford from the favour of both the Queen and the Tory party. The letters of Swift to Pope and Gay may be left to speak for themselves.

## SWIFT'S JOURNAL TO STELLA

[*The story of a famous duel*]

London, November 15, 1712.

Before this comes to your hands, you will have heard of the most terrible accident that has almost ever happened. This morning at eight, my man brought me word that duke Hamilton had fought with lord Mohun, and killed him, and was brought home wounded. I immediately sent him to the duke's house in St. James' Square; but the porter could hardly answer for tears, and a great rabble was about the house. In short, they fought at seven this morning: the dog Mohun was killed on the spot; and while the duke was over him, Mohun shortening his sword stabbed him in at the shoulder to the heart. The Duke was helped towards the cake-house by the ring in Hyde Park (where they fought),

and died on the grass, before he could reach the house ; and was brought home in his coach by eight, while the poor duchess was asleep. Macartney and one Hamilton were the seconds, who fought likewise, and are both fled. I am told that a footman of lord Mohun's stabbed duke Hamilton, and some say Macartney did so too. Mohun gave the affront, and yet sent the challenge. I am infinitely concerned for the poor duke, who was a frank, honest, good-natured man. I loved him very well, and I think he loved me better. He had the greatest mind in the world to have me go with him to France, but durst not tell it me ; and those he did tell said I could not be spared, which was true. They have removed the poor duchess to a lodging in the neighbourhood, where I have been with her for two hours, and am just come away. I never saw so melancholy a scene ; for indeed all reasons for real grief belong to her ; nor is it possible for anybody to be a greater lover in all regards. She has moved my very soul. The lodging was inconvenient, and they would have moved her to another ; but I would not suffer it, because it had no room backward, and she must have been tortured with the noise of the Grub street screamers mentioning her husband's murder in her cars.

DEAN SWIFT TO THE EARL OF HALIFAX

[*A plea for preferment*]

Leicester, *January 13, 1709.*

MY LORD,—

Before I leave this place (where ill health has detained me longer than I intended) I thought it my duty to return your Lordship my acknowledgments for all your favors to me while I was in town ; and, at the same time, to beg some share in your Lordship's memory, and the continuance of your protection. You were pleased to promise me your good offices upon occasion ; which I humbly challenge in two particulars ; one is that you will sometimes put my Lord President in mind of me ; the other is, that your Lordship will duly once every year wish me removed to England. In the meantime, I must take leave to reproach your Lordship for a most inhuman piece of cruelty ; for I can call your extreme good usage of me no better, since it has taught me to hate

the place where I am banished, and raised my thoughts to an imagination, that I might live to be some way usefull or entertaining, if I were permitted to live in Town, or (which is the highest punishment on Papists) anywhere within ten miles round it. You remember very well, my Lord, how another person of quality in Horace's time, used to serve a sort of fellows who had disoblged him; how he sent them fine cloathes, and money, which raised their thoughts and their hopes, till those were worn out and spent, and then they were ten times more miserable than before. *Hac ego si compellar imagine, cuncta resigno.* I could cite several other passages from the same author, to my purpose; and whatever is applyed to Mæcenas I will not thank your Lordship for accepting, because it is what you have been condemned to these twenty years by every one of us, *qui se mêlent d'avoir de l'esprit.* I have been studying how to be revenged of your Lordship, and have found out the way. They have in Ireland the same idea with us of your Lordship's generosity, magnificence, witt, judgement, and knowledge in the enjoyment of life. But I shall quickly undeceive them, by letting them plainly know that you have neither Interest nor Fortune which you can call your own; both having been long made over to the Corporation of deserving Men in Want, who have appointed you their advocate and steward, which the world is pleas'd to call Patron and Protector. I shall inform them, that myself and about a dozen others kept the best table in England, to which we admitted your Lordship in common with us, made you our manager, and sometimes allowed you to bring a friend, therefore ignorant people would needs take You to be the Owner. And lastly, that you are the most injudicious person alive; because, though you had fifty times more witt than all of us together, you never discover the least value for it, but are perpetually countenancing and encouraging that of others. I could add a great deal more, but shall reserve the rest of my threatenings till further provocation. In the mean time I demand of your Lordship the justice of believing me to be with the greatest respect,

My Lord,

Your Lordship's most obedient and  
most obliged humble servant

JON. SWIFT.

Pray, my Lord, desire D<sup>r</sup> South to dy about the fall of the Lcaf, for he has a Prebend of Westminster, which will make me your neighbour, and a sine-cure in the country, both in the Queen's gift, which my friends have often told me would fitt me extremely ; and forgive me one word, which I know not what extorts from me ; that if my Lord President would in such a juncture think me worth laying any weight of his Credit, you cannot but think me persuaded that it would be a very easy matter to compass : and I have some sort of pretence, since the late King promised me a Prebend of Westminster, when I petitioned him in pursuance of a recommendation I had from Sir William Temple.

For the Right Honourable  
the Lord Halifax, at his House  
in the New Palace-yard in Westminster,  
London.

DEAN SWIFT TO POPE

[*So much for Gulliver*]

Dublin, November 17, 1726.

I am just come from answering a letter of Mrs. Howard, writ in such mystical terms that I should never have found out the meaning, if a book had not been sent me called *Gulliver's Travels*,<sup>1</sup> of which you say so much in yours. I read the book over, and in the second volume observed several passages which appear to be patched and altered, and the style of a different sort, unless I am mistaken. D<sup>r</sup> Arbuthnot likes the projectors least ; others, you tell me, the flying island ; some think it wrong to be so hard upon whole bodies or corporations, yet the general opinion is, that reflections on particular persons are most to be blamed ; so that in these cases I think the best method is to let censure and opinion take their course. A bishop here said the book was full of improbable lies, and for his part he hardly believed a word of it ; and so much for Gulliver.

Going to England is a very good thing, if it were not attended with an ugly circumstance of returning to Ireland. It is a shame you do not persuade your ministers to keep me on that

<sup>1</sup> *Gulliver's Travels* had just been published anonymously.



side, if it were but by a court expedient of keeping me in prison for a plotter ; but at the same time I must tell you that such journeys very much shorten my life, for a month here is very much longer than six at Twickenham.

How comes friend Gay to be so tedious ? Another man can publish fifty thousand lics sooner than he can publish fifty talcs. . . . Let me add, that if I were Gulliver's friend I would desire all my acquaintance to give out that his copy was basely mangled, and abused, and added to, and blotted out, by the printer ; for so to me it seems, in the second volume particularly.

Adieu.

DEAN SWIFT TO GAY

[*Written while Gay was living with the Duke and Duchess of Queensberry*]

Dublin, May 4, 1732.

I am as lame as when you writ your letter, and almost as lame as your letter itself, for want of that limb from my Lady Duchess, which you promised, and without which I wonder how it could limp hither. I am not in a condition to make a true step even on Amesbury Downs, and I declare that a corporeal false step is worse than a political one ; nay, worse than a thousand political ones, for which I appeal to courts and ministers, who hobble on and prosper, without the sense of feeling. To talk of riding and walking, is insulting me, for I can as soon fly as do either. It is your pride or laziness, more than chair-hire, that makes the town expensive. No honour is lost by walking in the dark : and in the day you may beckon a blackguard-boy under a gate near your visiting place, (*experto crede*,) save elevenpence, and get half-a-crown's worth of health. The worst of my present misfortune is, that I eat and drink, and can digest neither for want of exercise ; and to increase my misery, the knaves are sure to find me at home, and make huge void spaces in my cellars. I congratulate with you, for losing your great acquaintance ; in such a case, philosophy teaches that we must submit, and be content with good ones. I like Lord Cornbury's refusing his pension, but I demur at his being elected for Oxford ;

which, I conceive, is wholly changed, and entirely devoted to new principles ; so it appeared to me the two last times I was there.

I find, by the whole cast of your letter, that you are as giddy and as volatile as ever, just the reverse of Mr. Pope, who hath always loved a domestic life from his youth. I was going to wish you had some little place that you could call your own, but I profess, I do not know you well enough to contrive any one system of life that would please you. You pretend to preach up riding and walking to the Duchess, yet from my knowledge of you, after twenty years, you always joined a violent desire of perpetually shifting places and company, with a rooted laziness, and an utter impatience of fatigue. A coach and six horses is the utmost exercise you can bear, and this only when you can fill it with such company as is best suited to your taste ; and how glad would you be if it could waft you in the air to avoid jolting ? while I, who am so much later in life, can, or at least could, ride 500 miles on a trotting horse. You mortally hate writing, only because it is the thing you chiefly ought to do ; as well to keep up the vogue you have in the world, as to make you easy in your fortune : You are merciful to everything but money, your best friend, whom you treat with inhumanity. Be assured, I will hire people to watch all your motions, and to return me a faithful account. Tell me, have you cured your absence of mind ? can you attend to trifles ? Can you at Amesbury write domestic libels to divert the family and neighbouring squires for five miles round ? or venture so far on horseback, without apprehending a stumble at every step ? can you set the footmen a-laughing as they wait at dinner ? And do the Duchess's women admire your wit ? in what esteem are you with the vicar of the parish ? Can you play with him at backgammon ? have the farmers found out that you cannot distinguish rye from barley, or an oak from a crab-tree ? you are sensible that I know the full extent of your country skill in fishing for roaches, or gudgeons at the highest.

I love to do you good office with your friends, and therefore desire you will show this letter to the Duchess, to improve her Graces' good opinion of your qualifications, and convince her how useful you are like to be in the family. Her Grace shall have the honour of my correspondence again, when she

goes to Amesbury. Hear a piece of Irish news ; I buried the famous General Meredyth's father last night in my Cathedral ; he was ninety-six years old ; so that Mrs. Pope may live seven years longer.

You saw Mr. Pope in health ; pray, is he generally more healthy than when I was amongst you ? I would know how your own health is, and how much wine you drink in a day ; my stint in company is a pint at noon, and half as much at night ; but I often dine at home like a hermit, and then I drink little or none at all. Yet I differ from you, for I would have society, if I could get what I like—people of middle understanding, and middle rank.

Adieu.

DEAN SWIFT TO THE EARL OF OXFORD

[*Some interesting recollections*]

June 14, 1737.

MY LORD,—

I had the honour of a letter from your lordship, dated April the 7th, which I was not prepared to answer until this time. Your lordship must needs have known that the history you mention of the *Four last years of the Queen's Reign*, was written at Windsor, just upon finishing the peace ; at which time your father and my lord Bolingbroke had a misunderstanding with each other that was attended with very bad consequences. When I came to Ireland to take this deanery (after the peace was made) I could not stay here above a fortnight, being recalled by a hundred letters to hasten back, and to use my endeavours in reconciling those ministers. I left them the history you mention, which I finished at Windsor, to the time of the peace. When I returned to England I found their quarrels and coldness increased. I laboured to reconcile them as much as I was able : I contrived to bring them to my lord Masham's, at St. James's. My lord and lady Masham left us together. I expostulated with them both, but could not find any good consequences. I was to go to Windsor next day with my Lord-treasurer ; I pretended business that prevented me : expecting they would come to some. . . . But I followed them to Windsor ; where my lord Bolingbroke told me that my scheme had come to nothing.

Things went on at the same rate ; they grew more estranged every day. My lord-treasurer found his credit daily declining. In May before the queen died I had my last meeting with them at my lord Masham's. He left us together ; and therefore I spoke very freely to them both and told them ' I would retire, for I found all was gone '. Lord Bolingbroke whispered me, ' I was in the right '. Your father said ' All would do well '. I told him ' that I would go to Oxford on Monday, since I found it was impossible to be of any use '. I took coach to Oxford on Monday ; went to a friend in Berkshire ; there stayed until the queen's death ; and then to my station here where I stayed twelve years, and never saw my lord your father afterward. They could not agree about printing the *History of the Four last Years* : and therefore I have kept it to this time, when I determine to publish it in London, to the confusion of all those rascals who have accused the queen and that ministry of making a bad peace ; to which that party entirely owes the protestant succession. I was then in the greatest trust and confidence with your father the lord-treasurer, as well as with my lord Bolingbroke, and all others who had part in the administration. I had all the letters from the secretary's office during the treaty of peace : out of those, and what I learned from the ministry, I formed that history, which I am now going to publish for the information of posterity, and to control the most impudent falsehoods which have been published since. I wanted no kind of materials. I knew your father better than you could at that time ; and I do impartially think him the most virtuous minister and the most able that I ever remembered to have read of. If your lordship has any particular circumstances that may fortify what I have said in the history, such as letters or materials, I am content they should be printed at the end by way of appendix. I loved my lord your father better than any other man in the world, although I had no obligation to him on the score of preferment ; having been driven to this wretched kingdom, to which I was almost a stranger, by his want of power to keep me in what I ought to call my own country, although I happened to be dropped here, and was a year old before I left it ; and, to my sorrow, did not die before I came back to it again. I am extremely glad of the felicity you have in your alliance ; and desire to present my most humble respects

to my lady Oxford and your daughter the duchess. As to the history, it is only of affairs which I know very well, and had all the advantages possible to know, when you were in some sort but a lad. One great design of it is, to do justice to the ministry at that time, and to refute all the objections against them, as if they had a design of bringing in popery and the pretender: and further to demonstrate that the present settlement of the crown was chiefly owing to my lord your father. I can never expect to see England: I am now too old and too sickly, added to almost a perpetual deafness and giddiness. I live a most domestic life: I want nothing that is necessary; but I am in a cursed, factious, oppressed, miserable country; not made so by nature, but by the slavish, hellish principles of an execrable prevailing faction in it.

Farewell, my lord. I have tired you and myself. I desire again to present my most humble respects to my lady Oxford and the duchess your daughter. Pray God preserve you long and happy! I shall diligently inquire into your conduct from those who will tell me. You have hitherto continued right: let me hear that you persevere so. Your task will not be long; for I am not in a condition of health or time to trouble this world, and I am heartily weary of it already; and so should be in England, which I hear is full as corrupt as this poor enslaved country. I am, with the truest love and respect, my lord, your lordship's most obedient and most obliged, etc.

JONATHAN SWIFT.

## LORD BOLINGBROKE

1678-1751

STRIKING evidence of Bolingbroke's powers, says James Prior, 'was the sway which he held over minds of no secondary order, over statesmen and men of letters. Lord Chesterfield, the worldly and the witty, and who thought himself above his fellows in penetration, thought extravagantly of his talents, whilst he cared nothing for his principles; Prior gave him his love; Swift, a caustic observer of men and manners, his esteem and regard; Arbuthnot, his applause; and Pope, almost his adoration'. It was due to Bolingbroke's influence over him as a friend and philosopher that Pope wrote his *Essay on Man*—mentioned in his charming postscript to Bolingbroke's letter to Swift, dated 1733—as well as the four *Moral*



*Essays* in verse. Bolingbroke's letter to Dean Swift was written two years after his return to England, whence he had been exiled for nine years, owing to his intrigues on behalf of the Stuarts. Although pardoned, and enabled, by an act passed in 1725, to inherit and acquire real estate, he was excluded from the House of Lords, and retired to France in 1735.

LORD BOLINGBROKE TO DEAN SWIFT

[*Written after his Return from Exile*]

London, July 24, 1725.

Mr. Ford will tell you how I do, and what I do. Tired with suspense, the only insupportable misfortune of life, I desired, after nine years of autumnal promises and vernal excuses, a decision; and cared very little what that decision was, provided it left me a liberty to settle abroad, or put me on a foot of living agreeably at home. The wisdom of the nation has thought fit, instead of granting so reasonable a request, to pass an act, which fixing my fortune unalterably to this country, fixes my person there also: and those, who had the least mind to see me in *England*, have made it impossible for me to live anywhere else. Here I am then, two-thirds restored, my person safe, (unless I meet hereafter with harder treatment than even that of Sir Walter Raleigh) and my estate, with all the other property I have acquired, or may acquire, secured to me. But the attainder is kept carefully and prudently in force, lest so corrupt a member should come again into the house of lords, and his bad leaven should sour that sweet, untainted mass. Thus much I thought I might say about my private affairs to an old friend, without diverting him too long from his labours to promote the advantage of the church and state of *Ireland*; or, from his travels into those countries of giants and pigmies, from whence he imports a cargo I value at an higher rate than that of the richest galleon. *Ford* brought the dean of *Derry* to see me. Unfortunately for me I was then out of town, and the journey of the former into *Ireland* will perhaps defer, for some time, my making acquaintance with the other, which I am sorry for. I would not by any means lose the opportunity of knowing a man, who can espouse in good earnest the system of father *Malebranche*, and who is fond of going a missionary into the *West Indies*. My zeal for the propagation of the Gospel will hardly carry

me so far ; but my spleen against *Europe* has, more than once, made me think of buying the dominion of *Bermudas*, and spending the remainder of my days as far as possible from those people, with whom I have passed the first and greatest part of my life. Health and every other natural comfort of life is to be had there, better than here. As to imaginary and artificial pleasures, we are philosophers enough to despise them. What say you ? Will you leave your *Hibernian* flock to some other shepherd, and transplant yourself with me into the middle of the *Atlantic* ocean ? We will form a society more reasonable, and more useful than that of doctor *Berkeley's* <sup>1</sup> College : and I promise you solemnly, as supreme magistrate, not to suffer the currency of *Wood's* halfpence : <sup>2</sup> Nay, the coiner of them shall be hanged, if he presumes to set his foot on our island.

Let me hear how you are, and what you do ; and if you really have any latent kindness still at the bottom of your heart for me ; say something very kind to me, for I don't dislike being cajoled. If your heart tells you nothing, say nothing, that I may take the hint, and wean myself from you by degrees. Whether I shall compass it or not, God knows : but, surely this is the properest place in the world to renounce friendship in, or to forget obligations. Mr. *Ford* says he will be with us again by the beginning of the winter. Your *Star* will probably hinder you from taking the same journey. Adieu, dear Dean. I had something more to say to you, almost as important as what I have said already, but company comes in upon me, and relieves you.

LORD BOLINGBROKE TO THE THREE YAHOO'S OF TWICKENHAM,  
JONATHAN, ALEXANDER, JOHN

[*A Gathering of Wits*]

From the banks of the Severn, *July 23, 1726*

Though you are probably very indifferent where I am, or what I am doing, yet I resolve to believe the contrary. I persuade myself that you have sent at least fifteen times

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Berkeley's scheme for a University in the Bermudas to improve our colonies failed for want of funds.

<sup>2</sup> This is a reference to Swift's *Drapier Letters* protesting against a new copper coinage to be introduced into Ireland by William Wood, of Birmingham.

within this fortnight to *Dawley* farm, and that you are extremely mortified at my long silence. To relieve you therefore from this great anxiety of mind, I can do no less than write a few lines to you ; and I please myself beforehand with the vast pleasure which this epistle must needs give you. That I may add to this pleasure, and give you further proofs of my beneficent temper, I will likewise inform you, that I shall be in your neighbourhood again by the end of next week ; by which time I hope that Jonathan's imagination of business will be succeeded by some imagination more becoming a professor of that divine science, *la bagatelle*.

Adieu, Jonathan, Alexander, John ! Mirth be with you.

LORD BOLINGBROKE TO SWIFT

[*The Tranquillity of a Philosopher ; with a PS. by Pope respecting his Mother*]

1733.

I have delayed several posts answering your letter of January last, in hopes of being able to speak to you about a project which concerns us both, but me the most, since the success of it would bring us together. It has been a good while in my head, and at my heart ; if it can be set a-going, you shall hear more of it. I was ill in the beginning of winter for near a week, but in no danger either from the nature of my distemper, or from the attendance of three physicians. Since that bilious intermitting fever, I have had, as I had before, better health than the regard I have paid to health deserves. We are both in the decline of life, my dear Dean, and have been some years going down the hill ; let us make the passage as smooth as we can. Let us fence against the physical evil by care, and the use of those means which experience must have pointed out to us : let us fence against moral evil by philosophy. I renounce the alternative you propose. But we may, nay, (if we will follow nature, and do not work up imagination against her plainest dictates,) we shall of course grow every year more indifferent to life, and to the affairs and interests of a system out of which we are soon to go. This is much better than stupidity. The decay of passion strengthens philosophy ; for passion may decay, and stupidity not succeed. Passions, (says Pope, our divine, as you will see

one time or other,) are the *gales* of life ; let us not complain that they do not blow a storm. What hurt does age do us, in subduing what we toil to subdue all our lives ? It is now six in the morning ; I recall the time, (and am glad it is over,) when about this hour I used to be going to bed surfeited with pleasure, or jaded with business : my head often full of schemes, and my heart as often full of anxiety. Is it a misfortune, think you, that I rise at this hour, refreshed, serene, and calm ? that the past, and even the present affairs of life stand like objects at a distance from me, where I can keep off the disagreeable so as not to be strongly affected by them, and from whence I can draw the others nearer to me ? Passions in their force would bring all these, nay, even future contingencies, about my ears at once, and reason would but ill defend me in the scuffle. I leave Pope to speak for myself ; but I must tell you how much my wife is obliged to you. She says, she would find strength enough to nurse you, if you were here ; and yet, God knows, she is extremely weak : the slow fever works under, and mines the constitution ; we keep it off sometimes, but still it returns, and makes new breaches before nature can repair the old ones. I am not ashamed to say to you, that I admire her more every hour of my life : death is not to her the King of Terrors ; she beholds him without the least. When she suffers much, she wishes for him as a deliverer from pain ; when life is tolerable, she looks on him with dislike, because he is to separate her from those friends to whom she is more attached than to life itself. You shall not stay for my next so long as you have for this letter ; and in every one Pope shall write something much better than the scraps of old philosophers, which were the presents, munuscula, that stoical fop Seneca used to send in every epistle to his friend Lucilius.

PS.—My lord has spoken justly of his lady ; why not I of my mother ? Yesterday was her birth-day, now entering on the ninety-first year of her age ; her memory much diminished, but her senses very little hurt, her sight and hearing good ; she sleeps not ill, eats moderately, drinks water, says her prayers ; this is all she does. I have reason to thank God for her continuing so long a very good and tender parent, and for allowing me to exercise for some years those cares which

arc now as necessary to her as hers have been to me. An object of this sort daily before one's eyes, very much softens the mind, but perhaps may hinder it from the willingness of contracting other ties of the like domestic nature, when one finds how painful it is, even to enjoy the tender pleasures. I have formerly made some strong efforts to get and to deserve a friend: perhaps it were wiser never to attempt it, but live extempore, and look upon the world only as a place to pass through: just pay your hosts their dues, disperse a little charity, and hurry on. Yet I am just now writing (or rather planning) a book,<sup>1</sup> to make mankind look upon this life with comfort and pleasure, and put morality in good humour. And just now too I am going to see one I love very tenderly; and to-morrow to entertain several civil people, whom if we call friends, it is by the courtesy of England. *Sic, sic juvat ire sub umbras*. While we do live, we must make the best of life.

*Cantantes licet usque (minus via lædet) eamus :*

as the shepherd said in Virgil, when the road was long and heavy.

I am yours.

JOHN GAY

1685-1732

GAY was a great favourite with the literary lions of his day, especially with Pope and Swift. 'Would to God', wrote Pope to the Dean in announcing Gay's death in 1732, 'the man we have lost had not been so amiable, nor so good; but that is a wish for our own sake, not for his'—and again, on another occasion, 'I wished vehemently to have seen him in a condition of perfect indolence the rest of our lives together, the two most idle, most innocent, most undesigning poets of our age'. The joint letter of Pope and Gay to Swift was written, it will be seen, just after the anonymous publication of *Gulliver's Travels*. The Duchess of Queensberry referred to in the second letter was the kindest of Gay's many patrons. She was a woman of many eccentricities, both of dress and conduct. Lord Bolingbroke used to call her '*sa singularité*', and Horace Walpole frequently refers to her as mad.

FROM GAY AND POPE TO SWIFT

[On '*Gulliver's Travels*']

November 17, 1726.

ABOUT ten days ago a book was published here of the Travels

<sup>1</sup> The *Essay on Man*.



of one Gulliver, which hath been the conversation of the whole town ever since : the whole impression sold in a week ; and nothing is more diverting than to hear the different opinions people give of it, though all agree in liking it extremely. It is generally said that you are the author ; but I am told, the bookseller declares he knows not from what hand it came. From the highest to the lowest it is universally read, from the cabinet council to the nursery. The politicians to a man agree, that it is free from particular reflections, but that the satire on general societies of men is too severe. Not but we now and then meet with people of greater perspicuity, who are in search of particular applications in every leaf ; and it is highly probable we shall have keys published to give light into Gulliver's design. Lord Bolingbroke is the person who least approves it, blaming it as a design of evil consequence to depreciate human nature, at which it cannot be wondered that he takes most offence, being himself the most accomplished of his species, and so losing more than any other of that praise which is due both to the dignity and virtue of a man. Your friend, my Lord Harcourt, commends it very much, though he thinks in some places the matter too far carried. The Duchess Dowager of Marlborough is in raptures at it ; she says she can dream of nothing else since she read it ; she declares that she hath now found out, that her whole life hath been lost in caressing the worst part of mankind, and treating the best as her foes ; and that if she knew Gulliver, though he had been the worst enemy she ever had, she would give up her present acquaintance for his friendship. You may see by this, that you are not much injured by being supposed the author of this piece. If you are, you have disoblinded us, and two or three of your best friends, in not giving us the least hint of it while you were with us ; and in particular Dr. Arbuthnot, who says it is ten thousand pities he had not known it, he could have added such abundance of things upon every subject. Among Lady-critics, some have found out that Mr. Gulliver had a particular malice to Maids of Honour. Those of them who frequent the church, say, his design is impious, and that it is depreciating the works of the Creator. Notwithstanding, I am told the Princess hath read it with great pleasure. As to other critics, they think the flying island is the least entertaining ; and so great an opinion the town have

of the impossibility of Gulliver's writing at all below himself, it is agreed that part was not writ by the same hand, though this hath its defenders too. It hath passed Lords and Commons, *nemine contradicente* ; and the whole town, men, women, and children, are quite full of it.

Perhaps I may all this time be talking to you of a book you have never seen, and which hath not yet reached Ireland ; if it hath not, I believe what we have said will be sufficient to recommend it to your reading, and that you will order me to send it to you.

But it will be much better to come over yourself, and read it here, where you will have the pleasure of variety of commentators, to explain the difficult passages to you.

We all rejoice that you have fixed the precise time of your coming to be *cum hirundine prima* ; which we modern naturalists pronounce, ought to be reckoned, contrary to Pliny, in this northern latitude, of fifty-two degrees, from the end of February, Styl. Greg. at farthest. But to us your friends, the coming of such a black swallow as you, will make a summer in the worst of seasons. We are no less glad at your mention of Twickenham and Dawly ; and in town you know you have a lodging at court.

The Princess is clothed in Irish silk ; pray give our service to the weavers. We are strangely surprised to hear that the bells in Ireland ring without your money.<sup>1</sup> I hope you do not write the thing that is not. We are afraid that B——<sup>2</sup> has been guilty of that crime, that you (like Houyhnhnm) have treated him as a yahoo, and disordered him your service. I fear you do not understand these modest terms, which every creature now understands but yourself.

You tell us your wine is bad, and that the clergy do not frequent your house, which we look upon as tautology. The best advice we can give you is to make them a present of your wine, and come away to better.

You fancy we envy you, but you are mistaken ; we envy those you are with, for we cannot envy the man we love. Adieu.

<sup>1</sup> Swift had a triumphal reception on his return to Dublin from England. In describing how, among other things, the bells of all the churches had been rung, Swift had probably mentioned that the ringers did this without receiving their usual fees.

<sup>2</sup> Presumably, Swift's servant.

GAY TO SWIFT.

[*His personal affairs and his first Comedy*]

Middleton Street, November 9, 1729.

I have long known you to be my friend upon several occasions, and especially by your reproofs and admonitions. There is one thing which you have often put me in mind of—the overrunning you with an answer before you had spoken. You find I am not a bit the better for it; for I still write and write on, without having a word of an answer. I have heard of you once by Mr. Pope. Let Mr. Pope hear of you next time by me. By this way of treating me, I mean by your not letting me know that you remember me. You are very partial to me—I should have said very just to me. You seem to think that I do not want to be put in mind of you, which is very true, for I think of you very often, and often wish to be with you.

I have been in Oxfordshire with the Duke of Queensberry for these three months, and I have had very little correspondence with any of our friends. I have employed my time in new writing a play which I wrote several years ago, called the *Wife of Bath*<sup>1</sup>. As it is approved or disapproved of by my friends when I come to town I shall either have it acted or let it alone, if weak brethren do not take offence at it. The ridicule turns upon superstition, and I have avoided the very words bribery and corruption. Folly, indeed, is a word that I have ventured to make use of; but that is a term that never gave fools offence. It is a common saying that he is wise that knows himself. What has happened of late, I think, is a proof that it is not limited to the wise.<sup>2</sup>

My Lord Bathurst is still my cashier. When I see him I intend to settle our accounts, and repay myself the five pounds out of the two hundred I owe you. Next week, I believe, I shall be in town—not at Whitehall, for these lodgings were judged not convenient for me, and were disposed of. Direct to me at the Duke of Queensberry's, in Burlington Gardens, near Piccadilly. You have often twitted me in the teeth

<sup>1</sup> Gay's first comedy, which had been unsuccessfully produced at Drury Lane in 1713. In its revised form it was performed at the theatre in Lincoln's Inn Fields, in 1730, but again proved a failure, though Gay was then at the height of his fame through the great success of his *Beggar's Opera*.

<sup>2</sup> There is a reference to Walpole, whom he supposes to have taken to himself the song on bribery in the *Beggar's Opera*.

with hankering after the Court. In that you mistook me ; for I know by experience that there is no dependence that can be sure but a dependence upon one's self. I will take care of your little fortune I have got. I know you will take this resolution kindly, and you see my inclinations make me write to you, whether you will write to me or not.

I am, dear sir, yours most sincerely and most affectionately.

J. G.

To the lady I live with I owe my life<sup>1</sup> and fortune. Think of her with respect, value and esteem her as I do, and never more despise a fork with three prongs. I wish, too, you would not eat from the point of your knife. She has so much goodness, virtue and generosity, that if you knew her you would have a pleasure in obeying her as I do. She often wishes she had known you.

## ALEXANDER POPE

1688-1744

IT was to William Wycherley, to whom the first of the following letters was written, that Pope owed his introduction to London life, where Swift, Addison, Steele and other famous wits and poets of the day were quick to recognize the remarkable gifts of the deformed young poet. The second letter—to Lady Mary Wortley Montagu—was of course written before her quarrel with Pope, whom she afterwards dubbed ‘the wicked asp of Twickenham’. ‘Pope’, she declared in one of her later letters, ‘courted with the utmost assiduity, all the old men from whom he could hope a legacy,—the Duke of Buckingham, Lord Peterborough, Sir G. Kneller, Lord Bolingbroke, Mr. Wycherley, Mr. Congreve, Lord Harcourt, etc., and I do not doubt projected to sweep the Dean's whole inheritance, if he could have persuaded him to throw up his deanery, and come to reside in his house ; and his general preaching against money was meant to induce people to throw it away, that he might pick it up’. But some allowance must be made for Lady Montagu's soreness of heart ; for Pope, with all his personal faults, was not without some lovable qualities. His letter to Swift, for instance—like his postscript to Bolingbroke's letter—illustrates, among other things, his whole-hearted devotion to his mother—the most beautiful feature of Pope's moral character.

<sup>1</sup> Gay's play entitled *Polly*—a sequel to *The Beggar's Opera*—had been prohibited by the Court from being acted, and he seems here to imply, as Elwin says in his edition of Pope, that he would have sunk under the mortification unless he had been sustained by the patronage of the Duchess of Queensberry. ‘His friends had spirited him up to a contest which was opposed to his disposition, and it laid him prostrate to find that the Court resented his satire’.

POPE TO WYCHERLEY

[Dryden and the Critics]

Binfield, in Windsor Forest,

December 26, 1704.

It was certainly a great satisfaction to me, to see and converse with a man, whom, in his writings, I had so long known with pleasure ; but it was a high addition to it to hear you, at our first meeting, doing justice to your dead friend, Mr. Dryden. I was not so happy as to know him ; *Virgilium tantum vidi*. Had I been born early enough, I must have known and loved him ; for I have been assured, not only by yourself, but by Mr. Congreve and Sir William Trumbull, that his personal qualities were as amiable as his poetical, notwithstanding the many libellous misrepresentations of them, against which, the former of these gentlemen has told me he will one day vindicate him. I suppose those injuries were begun by the violence of party ; but 'tis no doubt they were continued by envy at his success and fame : and those scribblers who attacked him in latter times were only like gnats in a summer's evening, which are never very troublesome but in the finest and most glorious season ; for his fire, like the sun's, shined clearest towards its setting. You must not, therefore, imagine, that, when you told me my own performances were above those critics, I was so vain as to believe it ; and yet I may not be so humble as to think myself quite below their notice. For critics, as they are birds of prey, have ever a natural inclination to carrion ; and, though such poor writers as I are but beggars, no beggar is so poor but he can keep a cur, and no author is so beggarly but he can keep a critic. I am far from thinking the attacks of such people either any honour or dishonour, even to me, much less to Mr. Dryden. I agree with you, that whatever wits have risen since his death, are but like stars appearing when the sun is set, that twinkle only in his absence, and with the rays they have borrowed from him. Our wit, as you call it, is but reflection or imitation, therefore scarce to be called ours. True wit, I believe, may be defined a justness of thought and a facility of expression. However, this is far from a complete definition ; pray, help me to a better, as I doubt not you can.



ALEXANDER POPE TO LADY MARY WORTLEY MONTAGU.

[*Before their quarrel*]

1716.

MADAM,—

I have been (what I never was till now) in debt to you for a letter some weeks. I was informed you were at sea, and that 'twas to no purpose to write till some news had been heard of your arriving somewhere or other. Besides, I have had a second dangerous illness, from which I was more diligent to be recovered than from the first, having now some hopes of seeing you again. If you make any tour in Italy, I shall not easily forgive you for not acquainting me soon enough to have met you there. I am very certain I can never be polite unless I travel with you: and it is never to be repaired, the loss that Homer has sustained, for want of my translating him in Asia. You will come hither full of criticisms against a man who wanted nothing to be in the right but to have kept you company; you have no way of making me amends, but by continuing an Asiatic when you return to me, whatever English airs you may put on to other people. I prodigiously long for your Sonnets, your Remarks, your Oriental Learning;—but I long for nothing so much as your Oriental self. You must of necessity be *advanced* so far *back* into true nature and simplicity of manners, by these three years' residence in the East, that I shall look upon you as so many years younger than you was, so much nearer innocence (that is, truth), and infancy (that is, openness). I expect to see your soul so much thinner dressed as your body; and that you have left off, as unwieldy and cumbersome, a great many European habits. Without offence to your modesty be it spoken, I have a burning desire to see your soul stark naked, for I am confident 'tis the prettiest kind of white soul in the universe. But I forget whom I am talking to; you may possibly by this time believe, according to the Prophet, that you have none; if so, shew me that which comes next to a soul; you may easily put it upon a poor ignorant Christian for a soul, and please him as well with it;—I mean your heart;—Mahomet, I think, allows you hearts; which (together with fine eyes and other agreeable equivalents)

are worth all the souls on this side the world. But if I must be content with seeing your body only, God send it to come quickly : I honour it more than the diamond casket that held Homer's *Iliads* ; for in the very twinkle of one eye of it there is more wit, and in the very dimple of one cheek of it there is more meaning, than all the souls that ever were casually put into women since men had the making of them.

I have a mind to fill the rest of this paper with an accident that happened just under my eyes, and has made a great impression upon me. I have just passed part of this summer at an old romantic seat of my Lord Harecourt's, which he lent me. It overlooks a common-field, where, under the shade of a haycock, sat two lovers, as constant as ever were found in Romance, beneath a spreading beech. The name of the one (let it sound as it will) was John Hewet ; of the other, Sarah Drew. John was a well-set man about five and twenty, Sarah a brown woman of eighteen. John had for several months borne the labour of the day in the same field with Sarah ; when she milked, it was his morning and evening charge to bring the cows to her pail. Their love was the talk, but not the scandal, of the whole neighbourhood ; for all they aimed at was the blameless possession of each other in marriage. It was but this very morning that he had obtained her parents' consent, and it was but till the next week that they were to wait to be happy. Perhaps this very day, in the intervals of their work, they were talking of their wedding clothes ; and John was now matching several kinds of poppies and field-flowers to her complexion, to make her a present of knots for the day. While they were thus employed, (it was on the last of July) a terrible storm of thunder and lightning arose, that drove the labourers to what shelter the trees or hedges afforded. Sarah, frightened and out of breath, sunk on a haycock, and John (who never separated from her) sat by her side, having raked two or three heaps together to secure her. Immediately there was heard so loud a crack as if Heaven had burst asunder. The labourers, all solicitous for each other's safety, called to one another : those that were nearest our lovers, hearing no answer, stepped to the place where they lay : they first saw a little smoke, and after, this faithful pair—John, with one arm about his Sarah's neck, and the other held over her face, as if to secure her from the lightning.

They were struek dead, and already grown stiff and cold in this tender posture. There was no mark or discolouring on their bodies, only that Sarah's eyebrow was a little singed, and a small spot between her breasts. They were buried the next day in one grave, in the parish of Stanton-Harcourt, in Oxfordshire ! where my Lord Harcourt, at my request, has erected a monument over them. Of the following epitaphs which I made, the eritics have chosen the godly one : I like neither, but wish you had been in England to have done this office better : I think 'twas what you could not have refused me on so moving an occasion.

When Eastern lovers feed the fun'ral fire,  
On the same pile their faithful Fair expire ;  
Here pitying Heav'n that virtue mutual found,  
And blasted both, that it might neither wound.  
Hearts so sincere, th' Almighty saw well pleas'd,  
Sent his own lightning, and the victims seized.

Think not, by rig'rous judgment seiz'd,  
A pair so faithful could expire ;  
Victims so pure Heav'n saw well pleas'd  
And snatch'd them in celestial fire.

Live well, and fear no sudden fate :  
When God calls Virtue to the grave,  
Alike 'tis justice, soon or late,  
Mercy alike to kill or save.  
Virtue unmov'd can hear the call,  
And face the flash that melts the ball.

Upon the whole, I can't think these people unhappy. The greatest happiness, next to living as they would have done, was to die as they did. The greatest honour people of this low degree could have, was to be remembered on a little monument, unless you will give them another—that of being honoured with a tear from the finest eyes in the world. I know you have tenderness ; you must have it ; it is the very emanation of good sense and virtue ; the finest minds, like the finest metals, dissolve the easiest.

But when you are reflecting upon objects of pity, pray do not forget one, who had no sooner found out an object of the highest esteem, than he was separated from it ; and who is so very unhappy as not to be susceptible of consolation,

from others, by being so miserably in the right as to think other women what they really are. Such an one can't but be desperately fond of any creature that is quite different from these. If the Circassian be utterly void of such honour as these have, and such virtue as these boast of, I am content. I have detested the sound of *honest woman and loving spouse*, ever since I heard the pretty name of Odaliche. Dear Madam, I am for ever

Your, etc.

POPE TO SWIFT

[*Gulliver* ; *Filial affection* ; ' *The Beggar's Opera* ' ; and  
' *The Dunciad* ']

1728.

I send you a very odd thing, a paper printed in Boston in New England ; wherein you'll find a real person, a member of their parliament, of the name of Jonathan Gulliver. If the fame of that traveller has travelled thither, it has travelled very quick, to have folks christened already by the name of the supposed author. But if you object, that no child so lately christened could be arrived at years of maturity to be elected into parliament, I reply (to solve the riddle), that the person is an Anabaptist, and not christened till full age, which sets all right. However it be, the accident is very singular, that these two names should be united.

Mr. Gay's Opera <sup>1</sup> has been acted near forty days running, and will certainly continue the whole season. So he has more than a fence about his thousand pounds ; he'll soon be thinking of a fence about his two thousand. Shall no one of us live, as we would wish each other to live ? Shall we have no annuity : you no settlement on this side, and I no prospect of getting to you on the other ? This world is made for Cæsar ; as Cato said, for ambitious, false, or flattering people to domineer in ; nay, they would not, by their good will, leave us our very books, thoughts, or words in quiet. I despise the world ; yet, I assure you, more than either Gay or you, and the court more than all the rest of the world. As

<sup>1</sup> *The Beggar's Opera*.

for those scribblers for whom you apprehend I would suppress my Dulness (which, by the way, for the future, you are to call by a more pompous name, *The Dunciad*), how much that nest of hornets are my regard, will easily appear to you when you read the *Treatise of the Bathos*.

At all adventures, yours and my name shall stand linked as friends to posterity, both in verse and prose ; and as Tully calls it, *in consuetudine Studiorum* ; would to God, our persons could but as well, and as surely, be inseparable. I find my other ties dropping from me ; some worn off, some torn off, some relaxing daily. My greatest, both by duty, gratitude, and humanity, Time is shaking every moment, and it now hangs but by a thread ! I am many years the older for living so much with one so old ; much the more helpless, for having been so long helped and tended by her ; much the more considerate and tender, for a daily commerce with one who required me justly to be both to her ; and consequently the more melancholy and thoughtful, and the less fit for others, who want only, in a companion or a friend, to be amused or entertained. My constitution, too, has had its share of decay, as well as my spirits ; and I am as much in the decline at forty, as you at sixty. I believe we should be fit to live together, could I get a little more health, which might make me not quite insupportable ; your deafness would agree with my dulness ; you would not want me to speak when you could not hear. But God forbid you should be as destitute of the social comforts of life, as I must when I lose my mother ; or that ever you should lose your more useful acquaintance so utterly, as to turn your thoughts to such a broken reed as I am, who could so ill supply your wants ! I am extremely troubled at the return of your deafness ; you cannot be too particular in the accounts of your health to me ; everything you do or say in this kind, obliges me, nay, delights me, to see the justice you do me, in thinking me concerned in all your concerns ; so that though the pleasantest thing you can tell me be that you are better or easier ; next to that it pleases me, that you make me the person you would complain to. As the obtaining the love of valuable men is the happiest end I know of in this life, so the next felicity is to get rid of fools and scoundrels ; which I can't but own to you, was one part of my design in falling upon these Authors, whose incapacity



is not greater than their insincerity, and of whom I have always found (if I may quote myself),

That each bad Author is as bad a Friend.

This poem will rid me of these insects—

*Cedite, Romani Scriptores, cedite, Graii ;  
Nescio quid majus nascitur Iliade.*

I mean than *my Iliad* ; and I call it *Nescio quid*, which is a degree of modesty ; but however, if it silence those fellows, it must be something greater than any *Iliad* in Christendom.

Adieu.

## RICHARD STEELE

1672-1729

STEELE 'is governed by his wife abominably', writes Swift to Stella ; and it must be confessed that a perusal of Steele's domestic correspondence does not leave too favourable an impression of the lady in question—Steele's second wife. There is something, however, to be said for Charles Knight's defence of her in his *Half Hours with the best Letter-Writers*. 'It appears to me', writes Knight, 'more than likely that the charming man would have gone very quickly to that "inevitable ruin" which Addison dreaded, had not the influence of the "odious" woman preserved him from an overwhelming load of follies and miseries. To the regularity of a domestic life we probably owe the undeviating punctuality of the publication of the *Tatler*, and the constant participation with Addison in the editorship of the *Spectator*. . . . It was well that he was under some government. But if his wife had been one who made his home wretched by her permanent ill-temper, would he have proclaimed his wife's merits to all the world, and have convicted himself with his intimate friends of the meanness of propitiating her with undeserved praise ?'

Knight here refers to the letter dated July 21, 1714, which Steele published as a dedication to *The Ladies' Library*. The letter to Addison dated 1705 appeared as a dedication to Steele's play *The Tender Husband*—printed four years before his old friend and schoolfellow became his chief collaborator on the newly started *Tatler*. It is painful to remember that this life-long friendship was broken at the last by a political squabble which could not be mended before Addison's death. The circumstances surrounding the remaining letters of Steele are dealt with in footnotes.

## RICHARD STEELE TO HIS WIFE

[*Matrimonial Trials*]

June 7, 1708.

DEAR PRUE,

I enclose to you a Guinea for y<sup>r</sup> Pocket. I dine with L<sup>d</sup> Hallifax.

I wish I knew how to Court you into Good Humour, for Two or Three Quarrells More will dispatch me quite. If you have *any* Love for me believe I am always *pursuing* our Mutuall Good. Pray consider that all My little fortune is to (be) Settled this month, and that I have inadvertently made me self Liable to Impatient People, who take all advantages. If you have (not) patience I shall transact my businesse rashly, and Lose a great sum to Quicken the time of y<sup>r</sup> being ridd of all people you don't like.

Y<sup>rs</sup> ever,

R<sup>d</sup> STEELE.

RICHARD STEELE TO HIS WIFE

[*Oil on troubled waters*]

August 12, 1708.

MADAM,—

I have your letter wherein you let me know that the little dispute we have had is far from being a Trouble to you. Nevertheless I assure you, any disturbance betweene us is the greatest affliction to me imaginable. You talk of the Judgement of the World, I shall never Govern my Actions by y<sup>t</sup>, but by the rules of morality and Right reason. I Love you better than the light of my Eyes, or the life blood in my Heart; but when I have lett you know that you are also to understand that neither my sight shall be so far enchanted, or my affection so much master of me as to make me forgett our common Interest. To attend my businesse as I ought, and improve my fortune, it is necessary that my time and my Will should be under no direction but my own. Pray give my most Humble Service to Mrs. Binns. I Write all this rather to explain my own thoughts to you than answer your letter distinetly. I enclose it to you that upon second thoughts you may see the disrespectfull manner in which you treat

Y<sup>r</sup> Affectionate Faithfull Husband :

R. STEELE.

RICHARD STEELE TO HIS WIFE

[*Published as the dedication of 'The Ladies' Library'*]

July 21, 1714.

MADAM,—

If great obligations received are just motives for addresses

of this kind, you have an unquestionable pretension to my acknowledgements, who have condescended to give me your very self. I can make no return for so inestimable a favour but in acknowledging the generosity of the giver. To have either wealth, wit, or beauty, is generally a temptation to a woman to put an unreasonable value upon herself ; but with all these, in a degree which drew upon you the addresses of men of the amplest fortunes, you bestowed your person where you could have no expectations but from the gratitude of the receiver, though you knew he could exert that gratitude in no other returns but esteem and love. For which must I first thank you ? For what you have denied yourself, or for what you have bestowed on me ?

I owe to you that for my sake you have overlooked the prospect of living in pomp and plenty, and I have not been circumspect enough to preserve you from care and sorrow. I will not dwell upon this particular ; you are so good a wife, that I know you think I rob you of more than I can give, when I say anything in your favour to my own disadvantage. Whoever should see or hear you, would think it were worth leaving all the world for you ; while I, habitually possessed of that happiness, have been throwing away impotent endeavours, for the rest of mankind, to the neglect of her for whom any other man in his senses would be apt to sacrifice everything else. I know not by what unreasonable prepossession it is, but methinks there must be something austere to give authority to wisdom ; and I cannot account for having only rallied many seasonable sentiments of yours, but that you are too beautiful to appear judicious. One may grow fond, but not wise, from what is said by so lovely a counsellor. Hard fate, that you have been lessened by your perfections, and lost power by your charms !

That ingenuous spirit in all your behaviour, that familiar grace in your words and actions, has for this seven years only inspired admiration and love ; but experience has taught me the best counsel I ever have received has been pronounced by the fairest and softest lips, and convinced me that I am in you blest with a wise friend, as well as a charming mistress.

Your mind shall no longer suffer by your person, nor shall your eyes for the future dazzle me into a blindness towards your understanding. I rejoice in this public occasion to

show my esteem for you, and must do you the justice to say that there can be no virtue represented in all this collection for the female world which I have not known you exert, as far as the opportunities of your fortune has given you leave. Forgive me that my heart overflows with love and gratitude for daily instances of your prudent economy, the just disposition you make of your little affairs, your cheerfulness in dispatch of them, your prudent forbearance of any reflections that they might have needed less vigilance had you disposed of your fortune suitably ; in short, for all the arguments you every day give me of a generous and sincere affection.

It is impossible for me to look back on many evils and pains which I have suffered since we came together, without a pleasure which is not to be expressed, from the proofs I have had, in those circumstances, of your unwearied goodness. How often has your tenderness removed pain from my sick head ; how often anguish from my afflicted heart ! With how skilful patience have I known you comply with the vain projects which pain has suggested to have an aching limb removed by journeying from one side of a room to another ! how often, the next instant, travelled the same ground again, without telling your patient it was to no purpose to change his situation ! If there are such beings as guardian angels, thus are they employed. I will no more believe one of them more good in its inclinations, than I can conceive it more charming in its form, than my wife.

But I offend, and forget that what I say to you is to appear in public. You are so great a lover of home, that I know it will be irksome to you to go into the world even in an applause. I will end this without so much as mentioning your little flock, or your own amiable figure at the head of it. That I think them preferable to all other children, I know is the effect of passion and instinct. That I believe you the best of wives, I know proceeds from experience and reason.

I am, Madam,

Your most obliged husband,

And most obedient, humble servant,

RICH. STEELE.

RICHARD STEELE TO JOSEPH ADDISON

[*Published as the dedication of 'The Tender Husband'*]

1705.

SIR,—

You will be surprised, in the midst of a daily and familiar conversation, with an address which bears so distant an air as a public dedication: but, to put you out of the pain which I know this will give you, I assure you I do not design in it, what would be very needless, a panegyric on yourself, or, what perhaps is very necessary, a defence of the play. In the one I should discover too much the concern of an author, in the other too little the freedom of a friend.

My purpose, in this application, is only to show the esteem I have for you, and that I look upon my intimacy with you as one of the most valuable enjoyments of my life. At the same time, I hope I make the town no ill compliment for their kind acceptance of this comedy, in acknowledging that it has so far raised my opinion of it, as to make me think it no improper memorial of an inviolable friendship.

I should not offer it to you as such, had I not been very careful to avoid every thing that might look ill-natured, immoral, or prejudicial to what the better part of mankind hold sacred and honourable.

Poetry, under such restraints, is an obliging service to human society; especially when it is used like your admirable vein, to recommend more useful qualities in yourself, or immortalise characters truly heroic in others. I am here in danger of breaking my promise to you, therefore shall take the only opportunity that can offer itself of resisting my own inclinations by complying with yours, I am, Sir, your most faithful, humble servant.

RICHARD STEELE TO MRS. MANLEY <sup>1</sup>[*A Literary Squabble*]

September 6, 1709.

MADAM,—

I have received a letter from you, wherein you tax me, as

<sup>1</sup> Mrs. Manley was the notorious author of the *New Atlantis* (1709), in which she attacked Steele and many other Whigs and notabilities of the day. She was arrested for slander, but escaped punishment. Mrs. Manley was in her turn attacked in the



if I were *Bickerstaff*, with falling upon you as author of *Atalantis*, and the person who honoured me with a character in that celebrated piece. (What has happened formerly between us can be of no use to either to repeat.) I solemnly assure you, you wrong me in this, as much as you know you do in all else you have been pleased to say of me. (I had not money when you did me the favour to ask the loan of a trifling sum of me.) I had the greatest sense imaginable of the kind notice you gave me when I was going on to my ruin ; and am so far from retaining an inclination to revenge the inhumanity with which you have treated me, that I give myself a satisfaction in that you have cancelled with injuries a friendship, which I should never have been able to return.

This will convince you how little I am an Ingrate ; for I believe you will allow, no one that is so mean as to be forgetful of kindnesses ever fails in returning injuries. As for the verses you quote of mine, they are still my opinion ; and your sex, as well as your quality of a gentlewoman (a justice you would not do my birth and education), shall always preserve you against the pen of your provoked most humble servant,

RICH. STEELE.

RICHARD STEELE TO DEAN SWIFT <sup>1</sup>

[*Strained Relations*]

SIR,—

Bloomsbury, May 26, 1713.

I have received yours, and find it is impossible for a man to judge in his own case. For an allusion to you, as one under the imputation of helping the *Examiner*, and owning I was restrained out of respect to you, you tell Addison, under your hand, ‘you think me the vilest of mankind’, and bid him tell

*Taller* by Swift, but she blamed Steele for it. Two years later she succeeded Swift as editor of the *Examiner*, and was assisted by him—also becoming the mistress of his old friend Alderman Barber. In her last play, produced at Drury Lane in 1717, Mrs. Manley made amends to Steele by apologising for his previous attacks, Steele, on his side, writing the prologue to the play.

<sup>1</sup> There had been a growing estrangement between Steele and Swift—who went over to the Tories in 1710—the dean feeling that Steele had not been sufficiently grateful for the influence which he had used on his behalf with Harley. It was after the publication of Swift’s bitter pamphlet, *The Importance of the Guardian Considered*, and of Steele’s *Crisis*—written in favour of the Hanoverian succession—that Steele was expelled by the Tory House of Commons in March, 1714. With the death of Anne a few months later, the Whigs came into power again, and both Steele and Addison were rewarded with various offices and honours. In the following year Steele was knighted.

me so. I am obliged to you for any kind things said in my behalf to the Treasurer; and assure you, when you were in Ireland, you were the constant subject of my talk to men in power at that time. As to the vilest of mankind, it would be a glorious world if I were: for I would not conceal my thoughts in favour of an injured man, though all the powers on earth gainsaid it, to be made the first man in the Nation. This position, I know, will ever obstruct my way in the world; and I have conquered my desires accordingly. I have resolved to content myself with what I can get by my own industry, and the improvement of a small estate, without being anxious whether I am ever in a Court again or not. I do assure you, I do not speak this calmly, after the ill usage in your letter to Addison, out of terror of your wit, or my Lord Treasurer's power; but pure kindness to the agreeable qualities I once so passionately delighted in, in you.

You know, I know nobody, but one that talked after you, could tell 'Addison had bridled me in point of party'. This was ill hinted, both with relation to him, and, Sir,

Your most obedient humble servant,

RICH. STEELE.

RICHARD STEELE TO THE EARL OF OXFORD <sup>1</sup>

[*Resigning his office as Commissioner of Stamps*]

June 4, 1713.

I am going out of any particular Dependence on your Lordship, and will tell you with the freedom of an indifferent Man, that it is impossible for any Man who thinks and has any publick Spirit, not to tremble at seeing his Country, in its present Circumstances, in the Hands of so daring a Genius as yours. If Incidents should arise that should place your own Safety, and what ambitious Men call Greatness, in a Ballance against the General Good, our All depends upon your Choice under such a Temptation. You have my hearty and fervent prayers to Heaven, to avert all such Dangers from you. I thank your Lordship for the Regard and Distinction you have at sundry

<sup>1</sup> Robert Harley, first Earl of Oxford, then Lord High Treasurer of Great Britain—the last to bear this title. Steele, who in 1710 had lost his gazetteership for satirising Harley, now resigned his post as commissioner of stamp duties, and his pension as gentleman-waiter to the late Prince George, in order to enter Parliament; and in the following August became M.P. for Stockbridge.

times show'd me, and wish you, with your Country's Safety, all Happiness and Prosperity. Share, my Lord, your good Fortune with whom you will ; while it lasts you will want no Friends ; but if any adverse Day happens to you, and I live to see it, you will find I think myself obliged to be your Friend and Advocate. This is talking in a strange Dialect, from a private Man to the first of a Nation ; but to desire only a little, exalts a Man's Condition to a level with those who want a great deal. But I beg your Lordship's Pardon, and am with great Respect, etc.,

RICHARD STEELE.

### JOSEPH ADDISON

1672-1719

ADDISON was qualifying for the diplomatic service when he wrote the following letter to William Congreve from Blois, having received a pension from the Crown of £300 a year for the purpose of enlarging his experience by foreign travel. Instead of entering the diplomatic service he returned to devote himself to politics and literature at home, succeeding so well from a pecuniary point of view as to be able, in 1711, to purchase for £10,000 the estate at Bilton, near Rugby, whence the next letter—with its interesting reference to 'poor Dick'—was written. 'Poor Dick', as we have just shown in the letters of Sir Richard Steele, had just resigned his pension and his post as Commissioner of Stamps in order to enter Parliament. Addison's letter to Pope, referring to his translation of the *Iliad*, was written only a few days after the preceding note. Addison, who has been charged with insincerity towards both Pope and Steele, came into collision with Pope in the following year, when he was accused of persuading Tickell to print a translation of Homer while Pope's version was appearing. A suspicion that Addison was himself the author of Tickell's translation led Pope to satirize him in the famous character of Atticus. The last of the Addison letters was written in the year following his marriage with Charlotte, Countess of Warwick. 'The reader will not omit to remark, as some presumption against the assumed matrimonial subserviency of Addison', writes Lucy Aikin in printing this letter in her life of Addison, 'the frank and confident tone in which he answers for the cordial welcome which would be afforded to his friend by his Sultana wife and her noble offspring'. Addison's married life lasted but a few years, for he died at Holland House on June 17, 1719. He was only 47.

### JOSEPH ADDISON TO WILLIAM CONGREVE

[*French Impressions*]

DEAR SIR,—

Blois, 1699.

I was very sorry to hear in your last letter that you were

so terribly afflicted with the gout, though for your comfort I believe you are the first English poet that has been complimented with the distemper. I was myself at that time sick of a fever, which I believe proceeded from the same cause; but at present I am so well recovered that I can scarce forbear beginning my letter with Tully's preface, *Si vales bene est, ego quidem valeo*. You must excuse me for giving you a line of Latin now and then, since I find myself in some danger of losing the tongue, for I perceive a new language, like a new mistress, is apt to make a man forget all his old ones. I assure you I met with a very remarkable instance of this nature at Paris, in a poor Irishman that had lost the little English he had brought over with him, without being able to learn any French in its stead. I asked him what language he spoke; he very innocently answered me, 'No language, Monsieur', which, as I afterwards found, were all the words he was master of in both tongues. I am at present in a town where all the languages in Europe are spoken except English, which is not to be heard, I believe, within fifty miles of the place. My greatest diversion is to run over in my thoughts the variety of noble scenes I was entertained with before I came hither. I don't believe, as good a poet as you are, that you can make finer landscapes than those about the king's houses, or, with all your descriptions, build a more magnificent palace than Versailles. I am, however, so singular as to prefer Fontainebleau to all the rest. It is situated among rocks and woods, that give you a fine variety of savage prospects. The King has humoured the genius of the place, and only made use of so much art as is necessary to help and regulate nature without reforming her too much. . . . But I begin to talk like Dr. Lister. To pass, therefore, from works of nature to those of art: in my opinion, the pleasantest part of Versailles is the gallery. Every one sees on each side of it something that will be sure to please him, for one of them commands a view of the finest garden in the world, and the other is wainscoted with looking-glass. The history of the present king to the year 16<sup>1</sup> is painted on the roof by Le Brun, so that his Majesty has actions enough by him to furnish another gallery much longer than the first. He is represented with all the terror and majesty that you can imagine in every part of the picture,

<sup>1</sup> Presumably the sixteenth year of his reign.

and sees his young face as perfectly drawn in the roof as his present one in the side. The painter has represented his Most Christian Majesty under the figure of Jupiter throwing thunderbolts, and striking terror into the Danube and Rhine, that lie astonished and blasted with lightning a little above the cornice. I believe by this time you are afraid I shall carry you from room to room, and lead you through the whole palace; truly, if I had not tired you already I could not forbear showing you a staircase that they say is the noblest in its kind; but after so tedious a letter I shall conclude with the petition to you, that you would deliver the enclosed to Mr. Montague, for I am afraid of interrupting him with my impertinence when he is engaged in more serious affairs. *Tu faciles aditus et mollia tempora nôvis.*

I am, etc.

JOSEPH ADDISON TO MR. HUGHES

[‘*Poor Dick*’]

Bilton, *October 12, 1713.*

DEAR SIR,—

I am very much obliged to you for your kind letter and the specimen, which I read over with great pleasure. I think the title of the Register would be less assuming than that of the Humanity-Club; but to tell you truly, I have been so taken up with the thoughts of that nature for these two or three years last past, that I now must take some time *pour me délasser*, and lay in fuel for a future work. In the meantime I should be glad if you would set such a project on foot, for I know nobody else capable of succeeding in it, and turning it to the good of mankind, since my friend has laid it down. I am in a thousand troubles for poor Dick,<sup>1</sup> and wish that his zeal for the public may not be ruinous to himself; but he has sent me word that he is determined to go on, and that any advice I may give him in this particular will have no weight with him.

I beg you will present my most sincere respects to Sir Richard Blackmore, and that you will add my sister's, who is now with me, and very much his humble servant. I wish

<sup>1</sup> Richard Steele.



I could see him and yourself in these parts, where I think of staying a month or two longer.

I am always with the greatest truth and esteem, etc.

JOSEPH ADDISON TO ALEXANDER POPE

[*The Translation of the 'Iliad'*]

October 26, 1713.

I was extremely glad to receive a letter from you, but more so upon reading the contents of it. The work<sup>1</sup> you mention will, I dare say, very sufficiently recommend itself when your name appears with the proposals: and if you think I can any way contribute to the forwarding of them, you cannot lay a greater obligation upon me, than by employing me in such an office. As I have an ambition of having it known that you are my friend, I shall be very proud of shewing it by this, or any other instance. I question not but your translation will enrich our tongue, and do honour to our country; for I conclude of it already from those performances with which you have obliged the public. I would only have you consider how it may most turn to your advantage. Excuse my impertinence in this particular, which proceeds from my zeal for your ease and happiness. The work would cost you a great deal of time, and, unless you undertake it, will, I am afraid, never be executed by any other; at least I know none of this age that is equal to it beside yourself.

I am at present wholly immersed in country business, and begin to take delight in it. I wish I might hope to see you here some time, and will not despair of it when you engage in a work that will require solitude and retirement.

I am yours, etc.

JOSEPH ADDISON TO DEAN SWIFT

[*An Invitation to Holland House*]

March 20, 1717-18.

DEAR SIR,—

Multiplicity of business and a long dangerous fit of sickness have prevented me from answering the obliging letter

<sup>1</sup> Pope's translation of the *Iliad*.

you honored me with some time since ; but, God be thanked, I cannot make use of either of these excuses at present, being entirely free both of my office and my asthma. I dare not however venture myself abroad yet, but have sent the contents of your last to a friend of mine (for he is very much so, though my successor), who I hope will turn it to the advantage of the gentleman whom you mention. I know you have so much zeal and pleasure in doing kind offices to those you wish well to, that I hope you represent the hardship of the case in the strongest colours that it can possibly bear. However, as I always honored you for your good nature, which is a very odd quality to celebrate in a man who has talents so much more shining in the eyes of the world, I should be glad if I could any way concur with you in putting a stop to what you say is now in agitation.

I may condole with you upon the loss of that excellent man the bishop of Derry,<sup>1</sup> who has scarcely left behind him his equal in humanity, agreeable conversation, and all kinds of learning. We have often talked of you with great pleasure, and upon this occasion I cannot but reflect upon myself, who, at the same time that I omit no opportunity of expressing my esteem for you to others, but have been so negligent in doing it to yourself. I have several times taken up my pen to write to you, but have always been interrupted by some impertinence or other ; and to tell you unreservedly, I have been unwilling to answer so agreeable a letter as that I received from you, with one written in form only ; but I must still have continued silent had I deferred writing till I could have made a suitable return. Shall we never again talk in laconic ? Whenever you see England your company will be the most acceptable in the world at Holland House, where you are highly esteemed by lady Warwick and the young lord ; though by none anywhere more than by, sir,

Your most faithful and most humble servant.

#### COLLEY CIBBER

1671-1757

LÆTITIA PILKINGTON, to whom Colley Cibber—then seventy-six years old—wrote the following letter, was the adventuress whose acquaintance with

<sup>1</sup> Dr. St. George Ashe, one of Addison's Irish friends, who is frequently referred to in Swift's correspondence.

Swift make her reminiscences one of our best authorities for the later life of the dean. Swift, who had been dead two years when this letter was written, had in 1832 obtained for Mrs. Pilkington's husband the post of chaplain to the Lord Mayor of London, a favour which Matthew Pilkington—a very minor poet as well as a penniless parson—rewarded only with baseness. Swift, in his righteous wrath, described him as the falsest rogue in the kingdom. Mrs. Pilkington, 'thou frolicsome farce of fortune', as the dissipated old dramatist calls her in his letter, was herself no better than she should have been. Separated from her husband she crossed from Dublin to London not long after Cibber's letter was written, and in the following year was imprisoned for debt in the Marshalsea. By Cibber's good offices she was released, and in the same year published her *Memoirs*. She also opened a little bookshop in St. James's Street, but did not succeed with it, and, returning to Dublin, died there in 1750.

## COLLEY CIBBER TO MRS. PILKINGTON

[*The Dramatist and the Grass Widow*]

June 29, 1747.

Thou frolicsome farce of fortune.

What! Is there another act to come of you then? I was afraid, some time ago, you had made your last exit. Well! but without wit or compliment, I am glad to hear you are so tolerably alive. I have your incredible narrative from Dublin before me, and shall, as you desire me, answer every paragraph in its turn, without considering its importanee or eonnection.

You say I have for many years been the kind preserver of your life. In this, I think, I have no great merit; because you seem to set so little value upon it yourself: otherwise you would have considered, that poverty was the most helpless handmaid that ever waited upon a high-spirited lady. But as long as the world allowed you wit and parts, how poor (eompared to you, without a shilling in your pocket) was an illiterate queen of the Indies. Oh, the glory of a great soul! Why, to be sure, as you say, it must be a fine thing indeed! But—a word in your Majesty's ear—common sense is no eontemptible creature, notwithstanding you have thought her too vulgar to be one of your maids of honour.

Common sense might have prevented as many misfortunes as your high-and-mightiness has run through. It is true, you have stood them all with a Catonian eonstaney; but I fancy you might have passed your life as merrily without them. You see I am still friend enough to be free with your

failings : but make the best of a bad market. You seem now to have a glimpse of a new world before you !

Think a little how you are to squeeze through the crowd, with such a bundle at your back ; and don't suppose it possible you can have a grain of wit, till you have twenty pounds in your pocket. With half that sum, a greater sinner than you may look the devil in the face. Few people of sense will turn their back upon a woman of wit, that does not look as if she came to borrow money of them : but, when want brings her to her wits' end, every fool will have wit enough to avoid her. But as this seems now to be your ease, I am more afraid of your being out of your wits at your good, than your bad fortune ; for I question whether you are as able to bear the first as the last. If you don't tell me a poetical fib, in saying that people of taste so often borrow *Cicero* of you, I will send you half a score of them, with which you may compliment those whom you suppose to be your friends ; perhaps you may have a chance of having the favour returned with something more than it is worth. Generosity is less shy of shewing itself, when it only appears to be grateful. In a word, if you would have these books, you must order some friend in London to call upon me for them ; for you know I hate care and trouble.

I am not sure your spouse's having taken another wife, before you came over, might not have proved the only means of his being a better husband to you ; for, had he picked up a fortune, the hush ! hush ! of your prior claim to him, might have been worth a better separate maintenance, than you are now like to get out of him. As for my health and spirits, they are as usual, and full as strong as any body's that has enjoyed his the same number of years. If the value I have for you gives you any credit in your own country, pray stretch it as far as you think it can be serviceable to you ; for under all the rubbish of your misfortunes, I can see your merit sparkle like a lost jewel. I have no greater pleasure, than in placing my esteem on those who can feel and value it. Had you been born to a larger fortune, your shining qualities might have put half the rest of your sex out of countenance. If any of them are uncharitable enough to call this flattery, tell them what a poor devil you are, and let that solace you. If ever you should recover enough of the public favour to

dissipate your former sorrows, I should be glad to see you here. In the mean time you will fully repay any service I may have done you, by sometimes letting me hear of your well-doing. I hope you have but one volume of your Memoirs in the press ; because, if that meets with any success, I believe I could give you some natural hints, which, in the easy dress of your pen, might a good deal enliven it.

You make your court very ill to me, by depreciating the natural blessings on your side the water.

What have you to boast of, that you want, but wealth and insolent dominion ? Is not the glory of God's creation, lovely woman ! there in its highest lustre ? I have seen several and frequent examples of them here ; and have heard of many, not only from yourself, but others, who, for the agreeable entertainments of the social mind, have not their equal play-fellows in Old England. And pray what, to me, would life be worth without them ? dear soft souls ! for now too they are lavish of favours, which, in my youth, they would have trembled to trust me with. In a word, if, instead of the sea, I had only the dry-ground Alps to get over, I should think it but a trip to Dublin. In the mean time we must e'en compound for such interviews as the post or the packet can send to you, or bring to

Your real Friend and Servant,  
C. CIBBER.

SAMUEL RICHARDSON

1689-1761

AARON HILL, to whom the first of our Richardson letters was sent, had an immense idea of his own abilities as a dramatist, prophesying that posterity would be reading him long after Pope—whose quarrel with him is one of the mildest in literary history—had fallen into oblivion. Richardson, however, gave him sound advice when he urged him not to ' write to a future age only '. The year in which this letter was written also saw the publication of Richardson's masterpiece *Clarissa*—eight years after the production of his first novel *Pamela*. The other letter throws a side light on the writing of his third book, *Sir Charles Grandison*, published in 1753. In *Clarissa* Richardson had drawn his ideal woman ; in *Sir Charles Grandison* he aimed to depict the perfect man, and Miss Mulso was one of the numerous lady friends with whom he corresponded while the work was in progress. Miss Mulso was the essayist who became Mrs. Hester Chapone. She also deserves to be remembered as Gilbert White's first and only



love. Richardson's voluminous correspondence—largely with his little circle of lady admirers—appeared in six volumes in 1804, but is, comparatively speaking, of little interest to readers of to-day.

SAMUEL RICHARDSON TO AARON HILL

[*Flattery and Advice*]

October 27, 1748.

DEAR SIR,—

With regard to some parts of your favour of the nineteenth, I will only say that I am too much pained on your account to express anything but my pain. A mind so noble ! so generous ! so underrating intentional good from himself ! so overrating trifling benefits from others ! But no more on this subject. You are an alien, Sir, in this world ; and no wonder that the base world treat you as such.

You are so very earnest about transferring to me the copyright to all your works, that I will only say, that that point must be left to the future issues of things. But I will keep account. I will, though I were to know how to use the value of your favours as to those issues (never can I the value of your generous intentions). You will allow me to repeat, *I will keep account*. It is therefore time enough to think of the blank receipt you have had the goodness to send me to fill up.

Would to heaven that all men had the same (I am sure I may call it just) opinion of your works that I have ! But—shall I tell you, Sir ?—The world, the taste of the world, is altered since you withdrew from it. Your writings require thought to read, and to take in their whole force ; and the world has no thought to bestow. Simplicity is all their cry ; yet hardly do these criers know what they mean by the noble word. They may see a thousand beauties obvious to the eye : but if there lie jewels in the mine that require labour to come at, they will not dig. I do not think, that were Milton's *Paradise Lost* to be now published as a new work, it would be well received. Shakespeare, with all his beauties, would, as a modern writer, be hissed off the stage. Your sentiments, even they will have it who allow them to be noble, are too munificently adorned : and they want you to descend to their level. Will you, Sir, excuse me this freedom ? Yet I can no longer excuse myself, to the love and to the veneration

mingled that I bear to you, if I do not acquaint you with what the world you wish to mend says of your writings. And yet for my own part, I am convinced that the fault lies in that indolent (that lazy, I should rather call it) world. You would not, I am sure, wish to write to a future age only — A chance too so great, that posterity will be mended by what shall be handed down to them by this. And few, very few are they who make it their study and their labour, to stem the tide of popular disapprobation or prejudice. Besides, I am of opinion that it is necessary for a genius to accommodate itself to the mode and taste of the world it is cast into, since works published in this age must take root in it to flourish in the next.

As to your title, Sir, which you are pleased to require my opinion of, let me premise, that there was a time, and that within my own remembrance, when a pompous title was almost necessary to promote the sale of a book. But the booksellers, whose business is to watch the taste and foibles of the public, soon (as they never fail on such occasions to do) wore out that fashion : and now, verifying the old observation, that good wine needs no bush, a pompous or laboured title is looked upon as a certain sign of want of merit in the performance, and hardly ever becomes an invitation to the purchaser.

As to your particular title to this great work, I have your pardon to beg, if I refer to your consideration, whether epic, truly epic, as the piece is, you would choose to call it epic in the title-page ; since hundreds who will see the title, will not, at the time, have seen your admirable definition of the word. Excuse, Sir, this freedom also, and excuse these excuses.—I am exceedingly pressed in time, and shall be for some time to come, or, sloven as I am in my pen, this should not have gone.

God forbid that I should have given you cause to say, as a recommendation, that there will be more prose than verse in your future works ! I believe, Sir, that Mr. Garrick in particular has not in any manner entered into vindictive reflections. I never saw him on the stage ; but of late I am pretty well acquainted with him. I know he honours you. But he thinks you above the present low taste ; (this I speak in confidence) and once I heard him say as much, and wish that you could descend to it. Hence one of the reasons that have impelled me to be so bold as I have been in this letter.

The occasion of the black wax I use, is the loss of an excellent

sister. We loved each other tenderly! But my frequent, I might say constant, disorders of the nervous kind ought to remind me, as a consolation, of David's self-comfort on the death of his child, perhaps oftener than it does, immersed as I am in my own trifles, and in business, that the common parental care permits me not to quit, though it become every day more irksome to me than another.

I am, Sir,  
 With true affection,  
 Your most faithful, and obedient servant.  
 S. RICHARDSON.

SAMUEL RICHARDSON TO MISS MULSO

[*On the Character of his 'Sir Charles Grandison'*]

September 3, 1751.

You tell me, my dear Miss Mulso, 'that I am really such a bamboozler on the subject of love, that you can't tell what to make of me'. Sometimes, say you, I am persuaded that 'you have a noble and just idea of the noblest kind of love'; and sometimes I think that 'you and I have different ideas of the passion'.

In another place you are offended with the word gratitude; as if your idea of love excluded gratitude.

And further on, you are offended that I call this same passion, 'a little selfish passion'.

And you say that you have known few girls, and still fewer men, whom you have thought 'capable of being in love'.

'By this', proceed you, 'you will see, that my ideas of the word love are different from yours, when you call it a little selfish passion'.

Now, madam, if that passion is not little and selfish that makes two vehement souls prefer the gratification of each other, often to a sense of duty, and always to the whole world without them, be pleased to tell me what it is. And pray be so good as to define to me what the noble passion is, of which so few people of either sex are capable. Give me your ideas of it.

I put not this question as a puzzler, a bamboozler, but purely for information; and that I may make my Sir Charles suscep-

tible of the generous (may I say generous ?) flame ; and yet know what he is about, yet be a reasonable man.

Harriet's passion is founded in gratitude for relief given her in a great exigence. But the man who rescued her is not, it seems, to have such a word as gratitude in his head in return for her love.

I repeat that I will please you if I can ; please you, Miss Mulso, I here mean (before, I meant not you particularly, my dear, but your sex), in Sir Charles's character ; and I sincerely declare, that I would rather form his character to your liking, than to the liking of three parts out of four of the persons I am acquainted with.

You are one of my best girls, and best judges. Of whom have I the opinion that I have of Miss Mulso on these nice subjects ?—I ask, therefore, repeatedly for your definition of the passion which you dignify by the word noble, and from which you exclude everything mean, little, or selfish.

And you really think it marvellous that a young woman should find a man of exalted merit to be in love with ?—Why, truly, I am half of your mind ; for how should people find what, in general, they do not seek ?—Yet what good creatures are many girls !—They will be in love for all that.

Why, yes, to be sure, they would be glad of a Sir Charles Grandison, and prefer him even to a Lovelace, were he capable of being terribly in love. And yet, I know one excellent girl who ' is afraid that ladies in general will think him too wise '.—Dear, dear girls, help me to a few monkey tricks to throw into his character, in order to shield him from contempt for his wisdom.

' It is one of my maxims ', you say, ' that people even of bad hearts will admire and love people of good ones '. Very true !—And yet admiration and love, in the sense before us, do not always shake hands, except at parting, and with an intention never to meet again. I have known women who professed to admire good men ; but have chosen to marry men—not so good, when lovers of both sorts have tendered themselves to their acceptance. There is something very pretty in the sound of the word wild, added to the word fellow ; and good sense is a very grateful victim to be sacrificed on the altar of love. Fervour and extravagance in expression will please. How shall a woman, who, moreover, loves to be admired,

know a man's heart, but from his lips ?—Let him find flattery, and she will find credulity. Sweet souls ! can they be always contradicting ?

' You believe it is not in human nature, however depraved, to prefer evil to good in another, whatever people may do in themselves '. Why, no one would really think so, did not experience convince us that many, very many young women, in the article of marriage, though not before to be thought to be very depraved, are taken by this green sickness of the soul, and prefer dirt and rubbish to wholesome diet. The result of the matter is this, with very many young women.—They will admire a good man, but they will marry a bad one. Are not rakes pretty fellows ?

But one thing let me add to comfort you in relation to Harriet's difficulties, I intend to make her shine by her cordial approbation, as she goes along, of every good action of her beloved. She is humbled by her love (suspense in love is a mortifier) to think herself inferior to his sisters ; but I intend to raise her above them, even in her own just opinion, and when she shines out the girl worthy of a man, not exalt but reward her, and at the same time make him think himself highly rewarded by the love of so frank and so right an heart.

There now !—will that do, my Miss Mulso ?

I laid indeed a heavy hand on the good Clarissa. But I had begun with her, with a view to the future saint in her character ; and could she, but by sufferings, shine as she does ? Do you, my dear child, look upon me as your paternal friend,

S. RICHARDSON.

## WILLIAM SHENSTONE

1714-1763

SHENSTONE was fond of complaining of the life he led as a recluse and a bachelor, but he took no steps to change it. ' Poor man ! ' said Gray, ' he was always wishing for money, for fame, and other distinctions ; and his whole philosophy consisted in living against his will in retirement, and in a place which his taste had adorned, but which he only enjoyed when people of distinction came to see and commend it '. Yet Shenstone must have derived considerable pleasure from that famous little estate in Worcestershire—the Leasowes—which he developed and beautified with so much care. ' A person may amuse himself almost as cheaply as he pleases ', he wrote on one occasion to his friend Jago. ' I find no small delight in rearing all sorts of poultry. . . . I would have you cultivate



your garden ; plant flowers, have a bird or two in the hall . . . write now and then a song, buy now and then a book, write now and then a letter to your most sincere friend'—and if that constituted Shenstone's idea of happiness he could not, at heart, have been so hopelessly discontented with his lot as some of his letters would have us believe.

WILLIAM SHENSTONE TO A FRIEND

[*A good Grumble*]

1741.

DEAR SIR,—

Now I am come home from a visit—every little uneasiness is sufficient to introduce my whole train of melancholy considerations, and to make me utterly dissatisfied with the life I now lead, and the life which I foresee I shall lead. I am angry, and envious, and dejected, and frantic, and disregard all present things, just as becomes a madman to do. I am infinitely pleased (though it is a gloomy joy) with the application of Dr. Swift's complaint, 'that he is forced to die in a rage, like a poisoned rat in a hole'. My soul is no more suited to the figure I make, than a cable rope to a cambric needle :—I cannot bear to see the advantages alienated, which I think I could deserve and relish so much more than those that have them.—Nothing can give me patience but the soothing sympathy of a friend, and that will only turn my rage into simple melancholy.—I believe soon I shall bear to see nobody. I do hate all hereabouts already, except one or two. I will have my dinner brought upon my table in my absence, and the plates fetched away in my absence ; and nobody shall see me : for I can never bear to appear in the same stupid mediocrity for years together, and gain no ground. As Mr. G—— complained to me (and, I think, you too, both unjustly), 'I am no character'.—I have in my temper some rakishness, but it is checked by want of spirits ; some solidity, but it is softened by vanity ; some esteem of learning, but it is broke in upon by laziness, imagination, and want of memory, etc.—I could reckon up twenty things throughout my whole circumstances wherein I am thus tantalized. Your fancy will present them.—Not that all I say here will signify to you : I am only under a fit of dissatisfaction, and to grumble does me good—only excuse me, that I cure myself at your expense. Adieu !

WILLIAM SHENSTONE TO RICHARD GRAVES, THE YOUNGER <sup>1</sup>[*The Sorrows of Solitude*]

1745.

DEAR MR. GRAVES,—

There is not a syllable you tell me concerning yourself in your last letter, but what applied to me is most literally true. I am sensible of the daily progress I make towards insignificance, and it will not be many years before you see me arrived at the *ne plus ultra*. I believe it is absolutely impossible for me to acquire a considerable degree of knowledge, though I can understand things well enough at the time I read them. I remember a preacher at St. Mary's (I think it was Mr. E——) made a notable distinction betwixt apprehension and comprehension. If there be a real difference, probably it may find a place in the explication of my genius. I envy you a good general insight into the writings of the learned. I must aim at nothing higher than a well-concealed ignorance.—I was thinking, upon reading your letter, where it was that you and Mr. Whistler and I went out of the road of happiness. It certainly was where we first deviated from the turnpike-road of life. Wives, children, alliances, visits, etc., are necessary objects of our social passions; and whether or no we can, through particular circumstances, be happy *with*, I think it plain enough that it is not possible to be happy *without* them. All attachments to inanimate beauties, to curiosities, and ornaments, satiate us presently.—The fanciful tribe has the disadvantage to be naturally prone to err in the choice of lasting pleasures: and when our passions have habitually wandered, it is too difficult to reduce them into their proper channels. When this is the case, nothing but the change or variety of amusements stands any chance to make us easy, and it is not long ere the whole species is exhausted. I agree with you entirely in the necessity of a sociable life in order to be happy: I do not think it much a paradox, that any company is better than none. I think it obvious enough as to the present hour; and as to any future influence, solitude has exceeding savage effects on our dispositions.—I have wrote out my elegy: I say no manner of stress but upon the piety of it.—Would it not

<sup>1</sup> Poet and novelist (1715–1804). Wrote his *Recollections of Shenstone*, 1788.

be a good kind of motto, applied to a person you know, that might be taken from what is said of Ophelia in Hamlet,

I tell thee, faithless priest,  
A ministring angel shall Ophelia be  
When thou art howling.<sup>1</sup>

I have amused myself often with this species of writing since you saw me ; partly to divert my present impatience, and partly as it will be a picture of most that passes in my mind ; a portrait which friends may value.—I should be glad of your profile : if you have objections, I drop my request.—I should be heartily glad if you would come and live with me, for any space of time that you could find convenient. But I will depend on your coming over with Mr. Whistler in the spring. I may possibly take a jaunt towards you ere long : the road would furnish me out some visits ; and, by the time I reached you, perhaps, afford me a kind of climax of happiness. If I do not, I shall perhaps be a little time at Bath. I do not speak of this last as a scheme from which I entertain great expectations of pleasure. It is long since I have considered myself as undone. The world will not perhaps consider me in that light entirely, till I have married my maid. Adieu !

## LADY MARY WORTLEY MONTAGU

1689-1762

LADY MARY WORTLEY MONTAGU, like the queen of letter-writers, Madame de Sévigné, owes her fame to her correspondence, though in this, as Joseph Spence, the friend of Pope, said, ' She is all irregularity, and always wandering ; the most wise, the most imprudent ; loveliest, most disagreeable ; best-natured, cruelest woman in the world '. Lady Mary accompanied her husband, who had been appointed ambassador to the Porte, in his journey to Constantinople, and wrote many of her best-known letters both during her residence there and on her way out. Her skill in the art of descriptive writing is seen to excellent advantage in the first and second of the following letters. It was on her return from Turkey in 1718 that Lady Mary introduced inoculation for small pox into England, having witnessed the practice in Constantinople, and she proved her faith in its safety by trying it first on her own son. The remaining letters are selected from her later correspondence, written to her daughter, the Countess of Bute, who filled the place in her mother's affections which Madame de Sévigné's daughter occupied in hers, and young Philip Stanhope in the affections of Lord Chesterfield.

<sup>1</sup> Shenstone quotes each line inaccurately, but he probably wrote from memory.

LADY MARY WORTLEY MONTAGU TO THE COUNTESS OF MAR

[*Court life in Vienna*]Vienna, *September 14, 1716.*

THOUGH I have so lately troubled you, my dear sister, with a long letter, yet I will keep my promise in giving you an account of my first going to court. In order to that ceremony, I was squeezed up in a gown, and adorned with a gorget, and the other implements therunto belonging, a dress very inconvenient, but which certainly shews the neck and shape to great advantage. I cannot forbear giving you some description of the fashions here, which are more monstrous and contrary to all common sense and reason than it is possible for you to imagine. They build certain fabries of gauze on their heads, about a yard high, consisting of three or four stories fortified with numberless yards of heavy ribbon. The foundation of this structure is a thing they call a *bourlé*, which is exactly of the same shape and kind, but about four times as big, as those rolls our prudent milkmaids make use of to fix their pails upon. This machine they cover with their own hair, which they mix with a great deal of false, it being a particular beauty to have their heads too large to go into a moderate tub. Their hair is prodigiously powdered to conceal the mixture, and set out with three or four rows of bodkins (wonderfully large, that stick out two or three inches from their hair) made of diamonds, pearls, red, green and yellow stones, that it certainly requires as much art and experience to carry the load upright, as to dance upon May-day with the garland. Their whalebone petticoats outdo ours by several yards circumference, and cover some acres of ground. You may easily suppose how this extraordinary dress sets off and improves the natural ugliness, with which God Almighty has been pleased to endow them, generally speaking. Even the lovely empress herself is obliged to comply, in some degree, with these absurd fashions, which they would not quit for all the world. I had a private audience (according to ceremony) of half an hour, and then all the other ladies were permitted to come and make their court. I was perfectly charmed with the empress; I cannot, however, tell you that her features are regular; her eyes are not large, but have a lively look full of sweetness; her complexion the finest I ever saw; her nose

and forehead well made, but her mouth has ten thousand charms that touch the soul. When she smiles, it is with a beauty and sweetness that forces adoration. She has a vast quantity of fine fair hair ; but then her person !—one must speak of it poetically to do it rigid justice ; all that the poets have said of the mien of Juno, the air of Venus, come not up to the truth. The Graces move with her ; the famous statue of Medici was not formed with more delicate proportions ; nothing can be added to the beauty of her neck and hands. Till I saw them, I did not believe there were any in nature so perfect, and I was almost sorry that my rank here did not permit me to kiss them ; but they are kissed sufficiently, for every body that waits on her pays that homage at their entrance, and when they take leave. When the ladies were come, she sat down to quinzé. I could not play at a game I had never seen before, and she ordered me a seat at her right hand, and had the goodness to talk to me very much, with that grace so natural to her. I expected every moment when the men were to come in to pay their court ; but this drawing-room is very different from that of England ; no man enters it but the grand master, who comes in to advertise the empress of the approach of the emperor. His Imperial Majesty did me the honour of speaking to me in a very obliging manner, but he never speaks to any of the other ladies, and the whole passes with a gravity and air of ceremony that has something very formal in it. The Empress Amelia, dowager of the late emperor Joseph, came this evening to wait on the reigning empress, followed by the two arch-duchesses her daughters, who are very agreeable young princeesses. Their Imperial Majesties rose and went to meet her at the door of the room, after which she was seated in an armchair next the empress, and in the same manner at supper, and there the men had the permission of paying their court. The arch-duchesses sat on chairs with backs without arms. The table was entirely served, and all the dishes set on by the empress's maids of honour, which are twelve young ladies of the first quality. They have no salary but their chamber at court, where they live in a sort of confinement, not being suffered to go to the assemblies or public places in town, except in compliment to the wedding of a sister maid, whom the empress always presents with her picture set in diamonds. The three first of them are called Ladies of



the Key, and wear gold keys by their sides ; but what I find most pleasant, is the custom, which obliges them as long as they live, after they have left the empress's service, to make her some present every year on the day of her feast. Her Majesty is served by no married women but the *Grande Maîtresse*, who is generally a widow of the first quality, always very old, and is at the same time groom of the stole and mother of the maids. The dressers are not at all in the figure they pretend to in England, being looked upon no otherwise than as downright chambermaids. I had an audience next day of the empress mother, a princess of great virtue and goodness, but who piques herself too much on a violent devotion. She is perpetually performing extraordinary acts of penance, without having ever done anything to deserve them. She has the same number of maids of honour, whom she suffers to go in colours ; but she herself never quits her mourning ; and sure nothing can be more dismal than the mourning here, even for a brother. There is not the least bit of linen to be seen ; all black crape instead of it. The neck, ears and side of the face are covered with a plaited piece of the same stuff, and the face, that peeps out in the midst of it, looks as if it were pilloried. The widows wear, over and above, a crape forehead cloth, and in this solemn weed, go to all the public places of diversion without scruple. The next day I was to wait on the Empress Amelia, who is now at her palace of retirement, half a mile from the town. I had there the pleasure of seeing a diversion wholly new to me, but which is the common amusement of this court. The empress herself was seated on a little throne at the end of the fine alley in her garden, and on each side of her were ranged two parties of her ladies of quality, headed by two young arch-duchesses, all dressed in their hair, full of jewels, with fine light guns in their hands, and at proper distances were placed three oval pictures, which were the marks to be shot at. The first was that of a Cupid, filling a bumper of Burgundy, and the motto, ' 'Tis easy to be valiant here '. The second, a Fortune holding a garland in her hand, the motto, ' For her whom Fortune favours '. The third was a Sword with a laurel wreath on the point, the motto, ' Here is no shame to the vanquished '.—Near the empress was a gilded trophy wreathed with flowers, and made of little crooks, on which were hung rich Turkish handkerchiefs, tippets,

ribbons, laces, etc., for the small prizes. The empress gave the first with her own hand, which was a fine ruby ring set round with diamonds in a gold snuff-box. There was for the second a little Cupid set with brilliants, and besides these a set of fine china for the tea table, encased in gold, japan trunks, fans, and many gallantries of the same nature. All the men of quality at Vienna were spectators ; but the ladies only had permission to shoot, and the Arch-duchess Amelia carried off the first prize. I was very well pleased with having seen this entertainment, and do not know but it might make as good a figure as the prize shooting in the *Æneid*, if I could write as well as Virgil. This is the favourite pleasure of the emperor, and there is rarely a week without some feast of this kind, which makes the young ladies skilful enough to defend a fort. They laughed very much to see me afraid to handle a gun. My dear sister, you will easily pardon an abrupt conclusion. I believe by this time you are ready to think I shall never conclude at all.

LADY MARY WORTLEY MONTAGU TO THE COUNTESS OF  
MAR

[*A visit to the Vizier's Harem*]

Adrianople, *April* 18, 1717.

I WROTE to you, dear Sister, and to all my other English correspondents, by the last ship, and only Heaven can tell when I shall have another opportunity of sending to you ; but I cannot forbear to write again, though perhaps my letter may lie upon my hands these two months. To confess the truth, my head is so full of my entertainment yesterday, that 'tis absolutely necessary for my own repose to give it some vent. Without further preface, I will then begin my story.

I was invited to dine with the grand-Vizier's lady ; and it was with a great deal of pleasure I prepared myself for an entertainment which was never before given to any Christian. I thought I should very little satisfy her curiosity (which I did not doubt was a considerable motive to the invitation) by going in a dress she was used to see, and therefore dressed myself in the court habit of Vienna, which is much more magnificent than ours. However, I chose to go incognita,

to avoid any disputes about ceremony, and went in a Turkish coach, only attended by my woman that held up my train, and the Greek lady who was my interpretest. I was met at the court door by her black cunuch, who helped me out of the coach with great respect, and conducted me through several rooms, where her she-slaves, finely dressed, were ranged on each side. In the innermost I found the lady sitting on her sofa, in a sable vest. She advanced to meet me, and presented me half a dozen of her friends with great civility. She seemed a very good-looking woman, near fifty years old. I was surprised to observe so little magnificence in her house, the furniture being all very moderate ; and, except the habits and number of her slaves nothing about her appeared expensive. She guessed at my thoughts, and told me she was no longer of an age to spend either her time or money in superfluities ; that her whole expense was in charity, and her whole employment praying to God. There was no affectation in this speech ; both she and her husband are entirely given up to devotion. He never looks upon any other woman ; and, what is much more extraordinary, touches no bribes, notwithstanding the example of all his predecessors. He is so scrupulous on this point, he would not accept Mr. Wortley's present, till he had been assured over and over that it was a settled perquisite of his place at the entrance of every ambassador. She entertained me with all kind of civility till dinner came in, which was served, one dish at a time, to a vast number, all finely dressed after their manner, which I don't think so bad as you have perhaps heard it represented.

I am a very good judge of their eating, having lived three weeks in the house of an effendi at Belgrade, who gave us very magnificent dinners, dressed by his own cooks. The first week they pleased me extremely ; but I own I then began to grow weary of their table, and desired our own cook might add a dish or two after our manner. But I attribute this to custom, and am very much inclined to believe that an Indian who had never tasted of either, would prefer their cookery to ours. Their sauces are very high, all the roast very much done. They use a great deal of very rich spice. The soup is served for the last dish ; and they have at least as great a variety of ragouts as we have. I was very sorry I could not eat of as many as the good lady would have had me, who

was very earnest in serving me of everything. The treat concluded with coffee and perfumes, which is a high mark of respect; two slaves kneeling censed my hair, clothes, and handkerchief. After this ceremony she commanded her slaves to play and dance, which they did with their guitars in their hands, and she excused to me their want of skill, saying she took no care to accomplish them in that art.

I returned her thanks, and soon after took my leave. I was conducted back in the same manner I entered, and would have gone straight to my own house; but the Greek lady with me earnestly solicited me to visit the Kiyàya's<sup>1</sup> lady, saying he was the second officer in the empire, and ought indeed to be looked upon as the first, the grand-Vizier having only the name, while he exercised the authority. I had found so little diversion in the vizier's harem, that I had no mind to go into another. But her importunity prevailed with me, and I am extremely glad I was so complaisant.

All things here were with quite another air than at the grand-Vizier's; and the very house confessed the difference between an old devotee and a young beauty. It was nicely clean and magnificent. I was met at the door by two black eunuchs, who led me through a long gallery between two ranks of beautiful young girls, with their hair finely plaited, almost hanging to their feet, all dressed in fine light damasks, brocaded with silver. I was sorry that decency did not permit me to stop to consider them nearer. But that thought was lost upon my entrance into a large room or rather pavilion built round with gilded sashes, which were most of them thrown up, and the trees planted near them gave an agreeable shade, which hindered the sun from being troublesome. The jessamines and honeysuckles that twisted round their trunks shed a soft perfume, increased by a white marble fountain playing sweet water in the lower part of the room, which fell into three or four basins with a pleasing sound. The room was painted with all sorts of flowers, falling out of gilded baskets, that seemed tumbling down. On a sofa raised three steps, and covered with fine Persian carpets, sat the Kiyàya's lady, leaning on cushions of white satin, embroidered; and at her feet sat two young girls about twelve years old, lovely as angels, dressed perfectly rich and almost covered with

<sup>1</sup> The Kiyàya is Lieutenant-Deputy to the Grand-Vizier.



jewels. But they were hardly seen near the fair Fatima (for that is her name), so much her beauty effaced everything I have seen, nay, all that has been called lovely either in England or Germany. I must own that I never saw anything so gloriously beautiful nor can I recollect a face that would have been taken notice of near hers. She stood up to receive me, saluting me after their fashion, putting her hand to her heart with a sweetness full of majesty, that no court breeding could ever give. She ordered cushions to be given me, and took care to place me in the corner, which is the place of honour. I confess, though the Greek lady had before given me a great opinion of her beauty, I was so struck with admiration that I could not for some time speak to her, being wholly taken up in gazing. That surprising harmony of features, that charming result of the whole ! the exact proportion of body ! that lovely bloom of complexion unsullied by art ! the unutterable enchantment of her smile.—But her eyes !—large and black, with all the soft languishment of the blue ! every turn of her face discovering some new grace. After my first surprise was over, I endeavoured by nicely examining her face, to find out some imperfection, without any fruit of my search, but my being clearly convinced of the error of that vulgar notion, that a face exactly porportioned, and perfectly beautiful, would not be agreeable, having done for her with more success, what Apelles is said to have essayed by a collection of the most exact features, to form a perfect face.

Add to all this a behaviour so full of grace and sweetness, such easy motions, with an air, so majestic, yet free from stiffness or affectation, that I am persuaded, could she be suddenly transported upon the most polite throne of Europe, nobody would think her other than bred and born for a queen, though educated in a country we called barbarous. To say all in a word, our most celebrated English beauties would vanish near her. She was dressed in a caftan of gold brocade, flowered with silver very well fitted to her shape and showing to admiration the beauty of her bosom, only shaded by the thin gauze of her shift. Her drawers were pale pink, her waistcoat green and silver, her slippers white satin, finely embroidered ; her lovely arms adorned with bracelets of diamonds ; and her broad girdle set round with diamonds ; upon her head a rich Turkish handkerchief of pink and silver,



her own fine black hair hanging a great length in various tresses, and on one side of her head some bodkins of jewels. I am afraid you will accuse me of extravagance in this description. I think I have read somewhere that women always speak in rapture when they speak of beauty, and I cannot imagine why they should not be allowed to do so. I rather think it a virtue to be able to admire without any mixture of desire or envy. The gravest writers have spoken with great warmth of some celebrated pictures and statues. The workmanship of Heaven certainly excels all our weak imitations, and, I think, has a much better claim to our praise. For my part, I am not ashamed to own I took more pleasure in looking on the beautiful Fatima, than the finest piece of sculpture could have given me. She told me the two girls at her feet were her daughters, though she appeared too young to be their mother. Her fair maids were ranged below the sofa, to the number of twenty, and put me in mind of the pictures of the ancient nymphs. I did not think all nature could have furnished such a scene of beauty. She made them a sign to play and dance. Four of them immediately began to play some soft airs on instruments, between a lute and a guitar, which they accompanied with their voices, while the others danced by turns. This dance was very different from what I had seen before. Nothing could be more artful. The tunes so soft!—the motions so languishing!—accompanied with pauses and dying eyes! half-falling back, and then recovering themselves in so artful a manner. I suppose you may have read that the Turks have no music but what is shocking to the ears; but this account is from those who never heard any but what is played in the streets, and is just as reasonable as if a foreigner should take his ideas of English music from the bladder and string, or the marrow-bones and cleavers. I can assure you that the music is extremely pathetic; 'tis true I am inclined to prefer the Italian, but perhaps I am partial. I am acquainted with a Greek lady who sings better than Mrs. Robinson, and is very well skilled in both, who gives the preference to the Turkish. 'Tis certain they have very fine natural voices; these were very agreeable. When the dance was over, four fair slaves came into the room with the silver censers in their hands, and perfumed the air with amber, aloes-wood, and other scents. After this they served me

coffee upon their knees in the finest Japan china, with sou-coups of silver, gilt. Then lovely Fatima entertained me all this while in the most polite agreeable manner, calling me often Guzél sultanum, or the beautiful sultana, and desiring my friendship with the best grace in the world, lamenting that she could not entertain me in my own language. When I took my leave two maids brought in a fine silver basket of embroidered handkerchiefs; she begged I would wear the richest for her sake, and gave the others to my woman and interpreters. I retired through the same ceremonies as before, and could not help thinking that I had been some time in Mahomet's paradise, so much was I charmed with what I had seen. I know not how the relation of it appears to you. I wish it may give you part of my pleasure; for I would have my dear sister share in all the diversions of,

Yours, etc.

LADY MARY WORTLEY MONTAGU TO THE COUNTESS OF  
BUTE

[*On the education of children*]

February 19, 1749.

MY DEAR CHILD,—

I gave you some general thoughts on the education of your children in my last letter; but fearing you should think I neglected your request, by answering it with too much conciseness, I am resolved to add to it what little I know on that subject, and which may perhaps be useful to you in a concern with which you seem so nearly affected.

People commonly educate their children as they build their houses, according to some plan they think beautiful, without considering whether it is suited to the purposes for which they are designed. Almost all girls of quality are educated as if they were to be great ladies, which is often as little to be expected as an immoderate heat of the sun in the north of Scotland. You should teach yours to conform their desires to probabilities, to be as useful as is possible to themselves, and to think privacy (as it is) the happiest state of life. I do not doubt your giving them all instructions necessary to form them to a virtuous life; but 'tis a fatal mistake to do this, without proper restrictions. Vices are often hid under the

name of virtues, and the practice of them followed by the worst of consequences.

Sincerity, friendship, piety, disinterestedness, and generosity, are all great virtues ; but pursued, without discretion, become criminal. I have seen ladies indulge their own ill humour by being very rude and impertinent, and think they deserved approbation, by saying I love to speak truth. One of your acquaintances made a ball the next day after her mother died, to shew she was sincere. I believe your own reflection will furnish you with but too many examples of the ill effects of the rest of the sentiments I have mentioned, when too warmly embraced. They are generally recommended to young people without limits or distinction, and this prejudice hurries them into great misfortunes, while they are applauding themselves on the noble practice (as they fancy) of very eminent virtues.

I cannot help adding (out of my real affection to you), that I wish you would moderate that fondness you have for your children. I do not mean you should abate any part of your care, or not do your duty to them in its utmost extent ; but I would have you early prepare yourself for disappointments, which are heavy in proportion to their being surprising. It is hardly possible, in such a number, that none should be unhappy ; prepare yourself against a misfortune of that kind. I confess there is hardly any more difficult to support ; yet, it is certain, imagination has a great share in the pain of it, and it is more in our power (than it is commonly believed) to soften whatever ills are founded or augmented by fancy. Strictly speaking, there is but one real evil, I mean acute pain ; all other complaints are so considerably diminished by time, that it is plain the grief is owing to our passion, since the sensation of it vanishes when that is over.

There is another mistake, I forgot to mention, usual in mothers : if any of their daughters are beauties, they take great pains to persuade them that they are ugly, or at least that they think so, which the young woman never fails to believe springs from envy, and is perhaps not much in the wrong. I would, if possible, give them a just notion of their figure, and show them how far it is valuable. Every advantage has its price, and may be either over or undervalued. It is the common doctrine of (what are called) good books,

to inspire a contempt of beauty, riches, greatness, etc., which has done as much mischief among the young of our sex as an over eager desire of them. Why they should not look on those things as blessings where they are bestowed, though not necessities that it is impossible to be happy without, I cannot conceive. I am persuaded the ruin of lady——<sup>1</sup> was in great measure owing to the notions given her by the good people that had the care of her. 'Tis true, her circumstances and your daughters' are very different: they should be taught to be content with privacy and yet not neglect good fortune, if it should be offered them.

I am afraid I have tired you with my instructions. I do not give them as believing my age has furnished me with superior wisdom, but in compliance with your desire, and being fond of every opportunity that gives a proof of the tenderness with which I am ever

Your affectionate mother,  
M. WORTLEY.

I should be glad if you sent me the third volume of Campbell's *Architecture*, and with it any other entertaining books. I have seen the Duchess of Marlborough's *Memoirs*, but should be glad of the *Apology for a Resignation*.<sup>2</sup> As to the ale, 'tis now late in the year, it is impossible it should come good. You do not mention your father; my last letter from him told me he intended soon for England.

LADY MARY WORTLEY MONTAGU TO THE COUNTESS OF  
BUTE

[*Bolingbroke, Madame de Sévigné, and Pope*]

Lovcre, July 20, 1754.

MY DEAR CHILD—

I have now read over the books you were so good to send, and intend to say something of them all, though some are not worth speaking of. I shall begin, in respect to his dignity, with Lord Bolingbroke, who is a glaring proof

<sup>1</sup> Lady Montagu's niece, Lady Frances Meadows.

<sup>2</sup> The anonymous pamphlet, inspired, or partially written, by Lord Chesterfield on his resignation, 1748.

how far vanity can blind a man, and how easy it is to varnish over to one's self the most criminal conduct. He declares he always loved his country, though he confesses he endeavoured to betray her to popery and slavery ; and loved his friends, though he abandoned them in distress, with all the blackest circumstances of treachery. His account of the peace of Utrecht is almost equally unfair or partial. I shall allow that, perhaps, the views of the Whigs, at that time, were too vast, and the nation, dazzled by military glory, had hopes too sanguine ; but surely the same terms that the French consented to, at the treaty of Gertruydenberg, might have been obtained ; or if the displacing of the Duke of Marlborough raised the spirits of our enemies to a degree of refusing what they had before offered, how can he excuse the guilt of removing him from the head of a victorious army, and exposing us to submit to any articles of peace, being unable to continue the war ? I agree with him, that the idea of conquering France is a wild extravagant notion, and would, if possible, be impolitic ; but she might have been reduced to such a state, as would have rendered her incapable of being terrible to her neighbours for some ages : nor should we have been obliged, as we have done almost ever since, to bribe the French ministers to let us live in quiet. So much for his political reasonings, which, I confess, are delivered in a florid easy style ; but I cannot be of Lord Orrery's opinion, that he is one of the best English writers. Well turned periods, or smooth lines, are not the perfection either of prose or verse ; they may serve to adorn, but can never stand in the place of good sense. Copiousness of words, however ranged, is always false eloquence, though it will ever impose on some sort of understandings. How many readers and admirers has Madame de Sévigné, who only gives us, in a lively manner and fashionable phrases, mean sentiments, vulgar prejudices, and endless repetitions ? Sometimes the tittle tattle of a fine lady, sometimes that of an old nurse, always tittle tattle ; yet so well gilt over by airy expressions, and a flowing style, she will always please the same people to whom Lord Bolingbroke will shine as a first-rate author. She is so far to be excused, as her letters were not intended for the press ; while he labours to display to posterity all the wit and learning he is master of, and sometimes spoils a good argument by a pro-



fusion of words, running out into several pages a thought that might have been more clearly expressed in a few lines, and, what is more, often falls into contradiction and repetitions, which are almost unavoidable to all voluminous writers, and can only be forgiven to those retailers, whose necessity compels them to diurnal scribbling, who load their meaning with epithets, and run into digressions, because (in the jockey phrase) it rids ground, that is, covers a certain quantity of paper, to answer the demand of the day. A great part of Lord Bolingbroke's letters are designed to shew his reading, which, indeed, appears to have been very extensive; but I cannot perceive that such a minute account of it can be of any use to the pupil he pretends to instruct, nor can I help thinking he is far below either Tillotson or Addison, even in style, though the latter was sometimes more diffuse than his judgment approved, to furnish out the length of a daily *Spectator*. I own I have small regard for Lord Bolingbroke as an author, and the highest contempt for him as a man. He came into the world greatly favoured both by nature and fortune, blest with a noble birth, heir to a large estate, endowed with a strong constitution, and, as I have heard, a beautiful figure, high spirits, a good memory, and a lively apprehension, which was cultivated by a learned education: all these glorious advantages, being left to the direction of a judgment stifled by unbounded vanity, he dishonoured his birth, lost his estate, ruined his reputation, and destroyed his health, by a wild pursuit of eminence even in vice and trifles.

I am far from making misfortune a matter of reproach. I know there are accidental occurrences not to be foreseen or avoided by human prudence, by which a character may be injured, wealth dissipated or a constitution impaired: but I think I may reasonably despise the understanding of one who conducts himself in such a manner as naturally produces such lamentable consequences, and continues in the same destructive paths to the end of a long life, ostentatiously boasting of morals and philosophy in print, and with equal ostentation bragging of the scenes of low debauchery in public conversation, though deplorably weak both in mind and body, and his virtue, and his vigour in a state of non-existence. His confederacy with Swift and Pope puts me in mind of that of Bessus and his sword-men, in the *King and*

*No King*, who endeavour to support themselves by giving certificates of each other's merit.

Pope has triumphantly declared that they may do and say whatever silly things they please, they will still be the greatest geniuses nature ever exhibited. I am delighted with the comparison given of their benevolence, which is indeed most aptly figured by a circle in the water, which widens till it comes to nothing at all ; but I am provoked at Lord Bolingbroke's misrepresentation of my favourite Atticus, who seems to have been the only Roman that, from good sense, had a true notion of the times in which he lived ; in which the republic was inevitably perishing, and the two factions, who pretended to support it, equally endeavouring to gratify their ambition in its ruin. A wise man, in that case, would certainly declare for neither, and try to save himself and family from the general wreck, which could not be done but by a superiority of understanding acknowledged on both sides. I see no glory in losing life or fortune by being the dupe of either, and very much applaud the conduct which could preserve an universal esteem amidst the fury of opposite parties. We are obliged to act vigorously, where action can do any good ; but in a storm, when it is impossible to work with success, the best hands and ablest pilots may laudably gain the shore if they can. Atticus could be a friend to men, without awaking their resentment, and be satisfied with his own virtue without seeking popular fame : he had the reward of his wisdom in his tranquillity, and will ever stand among the few examples of true philosophy, either ancient or modern.

You must forgive this tedious dissertation. I hope you read in the same spirit I write, and take as proofs of affection whatever is sent you by your truly affectionate mother,

M. WORTLEY.

## LORD CHESTERFIELD

1694-1773

LORD CHESTERFIELD little imagined that his name would be handed down to posterity mainly on account of the *Letters to his Son*. He seems never to have thought of publication in their connexion, and when they made their first appearance in the year following his death they were printed, of course, without his revision. His natural son may not have profited by

the 'prodigious quantity of manure which had been laid' upon him (to quote Chesterfield's own remark); but we are, at least, indebted to him for the preservation of the letters themselves, though it was his widow, Mrs. Eugenia Stanhope, who turned them to pecuniary account after the old nobleman's death. She sold them for £1,575. Philip Stanhope himself had died some five years previously, leaving the Earl the unsuspected legacy of his widow and two children, for he had married secretly some years before. Mrs. Stanhope, we are told, was 'plain almost to ugliness', and of no particular birth, but Lord Chesterfield seems to have behaved very well towards her. He also paid for the children's education, and left them annuities in his will. One of his letters to their mother is now printed, preceded by a characteristic specimen from his *Letters to his Son*. The letter to Dean Swift shows Chesterfield as a patron in a different light from that in which Dr. Johnson's celebrated letter has placed him.

LORD CHESTERFIELD TO HIS SON

[*How to become a man of fashion*]

London, *September the 27th*,

O. S. 1748.

DEAR BOY,—

I have received your Latin Lecture upon War, which, though it is not exactly the same Latin that Cæsar, Cicero, Horace, Virgil, and Ovid spoke, is, however, as good Latin as the erudite Germans speak or write! I have always observed that the most learned people, that is, those who have read the most Latin, write the worst; and that distinguishes the Latin of a gentleman scholar, from that of a pedant. A gentleman has probably read no other Latin than that of the Augustan age; and therefore can write no other; whereas the pedant has read much more bad Latin than good; and consequently writes so too. He looks upon the best classical books, as books for school-boys, and consequently below him; but pores over fragments of obscure authors, treasures up the obsolete words which he meets with there, and uses them upon all occasions, to show his reading, at the expense of his judgment. Plautus is his favourite author, not for the sake of the wit and the *vis comica* of his comedies, but upon account of the many obsolete words, and the cant of low characters, which are to be met with no where else. He will rather use *olli* than *illi*, *optumê* than *optimè*, and any bad word rather than any good one, provided he can but prove that, strictly speaking, it is Latin; that is, that it was written by a Roman. By this

rule, I might now write to you in the language of Chaucer or Spenser, and assert that I wrote English, because it was English in those days ; but I should be a most affected puppy if I did so, and you would not understand three words of my letter. All these, and such-like affected peculiarities, are the characteristics of learned coxcombs and pedants, and are carefully avoided by all men of sense. . . .

Your letters, except when upon a given subject, are exceedingly laconic, and neither answer my desires, nor the purpose of letters ; which should be familiar conversations between absent friends. As I desire to live with you upon the footing of an intimate friend, and not of a parent, I could wish that your letters gave me more particular accounts of yourself, and of your lesser transactions. When you write to me, suppose yourself conversing freely with me, by the fireside. In that case, you would naturally mention the incidents of the day ; as where you had been, whom you had seen, what you thought of them, etc. Do this in your letters : acquaint me sometimes with your studies ; sometimes with your diversions ; tell me of any new persons and characters that you meet in company, and add your own observations upon them ; in short, let me see more of you in your letters. How do you go on with Lord Pulteney ; and how does he go on at Leipzig ? Has he learning, has he parts, has he application ? Is he good or ill-natured ? In short, what is he, at least, what do you think him ? You may tell me without reserve, for I promise you secrecy. You are now of an age, that I am desirous of beginning a confidential correspondence with you ; and, as I shall, on my part, write you very freely my opinion on men and things, which I should often be very unwilling that anybody but you or Mr. Harte should see ; so, on your part, if you write me without reserve, you may depend upon my inviolable secrecy. If you have ever looked into the letters of Madame de Sévigné, to her daughter Madame de Grignan, you must have observed the ease, freedom, and friendship of that correspondence, and yet I hope, and believe, that they did not love one another better than we do. Tell me what books you are now reading, either by way of study or amusement ; how you pass your evenings when at home, and where you pass them when abroad. I know you go sometimes to Madame Valentin's assembly. What do you there ;



do you play, or sup, or is it only *la belle conversation* ? Do you mind your dancing, while your dancing-master is with you ? As you will be often under the necessity of dancing a minuet, I would have you dance it very well. Remember that the graceful motion of the arms, the giving of the hand, and the putting on, and the pulling off of your hat genteelly, are the material parts of a gentleman's dancing. But the greatest advantage of dancing well, is, that it necessarily teaches you to present yourself, to sit, stand, and walk genteelly ; all of which are of real importance to a man of fashion.

I should wish that you were polished, before you go to Berlin ; where, as you will be in a great deal of good company, I would have you have the right manners for it. It is a very considerable article to have *le ton de la bonne compagnie*, in your destination particularly. The principal business of a foreign minister is, to get into the secrets, and to know all *les allures* of the Courts at which he resides ; this he can never bring about, but by such a pleasing address, such engaging manners, and such an insinuating behaviour, as may make him sought for, and in some measure domestic, in the best company and the best families of the place. He will, then, indeed, be well informed of all that passes ; either by the confidences made him, or by the carelessness of people in his company : who are accustomed to look upon him as one of them, and consequently (are) not upon their guard before him. For a Minister, who only goes to the Court he resides at in form, to ask an audience of the Prince or the Minister, upon his last instructions, puts them upon their guard, and will never know anything more than what they have a mind that he should know. Here women may be put to some use. A King's mistress, or a Minister's wife or mistress, may give great and useful information ; and are very apt to do it, being proud to show that they have been trusted. But then, in this case, the height of that sort of address which strikes women, is requisite ; I mean that easy politeness, graceful and genteel address, and that *extérieur brillant*, which they cannot withstand. There is a sort of men so like women, that they are to be taken just in the same way—I mean those who are commonly called *fine men*, who swarm at all Courts—who have little reflection, and less knowledge ; but who, by their good-breeding and *train-train* of the world, are admitted



into all companies ; and, by the imprudence or carelessness of their superiors, pick up secrets worth knowing, and easily got out of them by proper address. Adieu.

LORD CHESTERFIELD TO MRS. EUGENIA STANHOPE

[*His grandchildren and their mother*]

Bath, November 5, 1769.

MADAM,—

I remember very well the paragraph which you quote from a letter of mine to Mrs. du Bouchet, and see no reason yet to retract that opinion, *in general*, which at least nineteen widows in twenty had authorised. I had not then the pleasure of your acquaintance ; I had seen you but twice or thrice ; and I had no reason to think that you would deviate, as you have done, from other widows, so much, as to put perpetual shackles on yourself, for the sake of your children ; but (if I may use a vulgarism) one swallow makes no summer : five righteous were formerly necessary to save a city, and they could not be found ; so, till I find four more such righteous widows as yourself, I shall entertain my former notions of widowhood in general.

I can assure you that I drink here very soberly and cautiously, and at the same time keep so cool a diet, that I do not find the least symptom of heat, much less of inflammation. By the way, I never had that complaint, in consequence of having drank these waters ; for I have had it but four times, and always in the middle of Summer. Mr. Hawkins is timorous even to *minuties*, and my sister delights in them.

Charles will be a scholar, if you please ; but our little Philip, without being one, will be something or other as good, though I do not yet guess what. I am not of the opinion generally entertained in this country, that man lives by Greek and Latin alone ; that is, by knowing a great many words of two dead languages, which nobody living knows perfectly, and which are of no use in the common intercourse of life. Useful knowledge, in my opinion, consists of modern languages, history, and geography ; some Latin may be thrown into the bargain, in compliance with custom and for closet amusement.

You are, by this time, certainly tired with this long letter, which I could prove to you from Horace's own words (for I

am a scholar) to be a bad one ; he says, that water-drinkers can write nothing good ; so I am, with real truth and esteem,  
Yours, etc.

THE EARL OF CHESTERFIELD TO DEAN SWIFT

[*His opportunities of patronage*]

SIR,—

Hague, *December* 15, N. S. 1730.<sup>1</sup>

You need not have made any excuse to me for your solicitation : on the contrary, I am proud of being the first person to whom you have thought it worth the while to apply since those changes, which, you say, drove you into distance and obscurity. I very well know the person you recommend to me, having lodged at his house a whole summer at Richmond. I have always heard a very good character of him, which alone would incline me to serve him ; but your recommendation, I can assure you, will make me impatient to do it. However, that he may not again meet with the common fate of court-suitors, nor I lie under the imputation of making court-promises, I will exactly explain to you how far it is likely I may be able to serve him.

When first I had this office, I took the resolution of turning out nobody ; so that I shall only have the disposal of those places that the death of the present possessors will procure me. Some old servants, that have served me long and faithfully, have obtained the promises of the first four or five vacancies, and the early solicitations of some of my particular friends have tied me down for about as many more. But, after having satisfied these engagements, I do assure you, Mr. Launcelot shall be my first care. I confess, his prospect is more remote than I could have wished it ; but, as it is so remote, he will not have the uneasiness of a disappointment, if he gets nothing ; and if he gets something, we shall both be pleased.

As for his political principles, I am in no manner of pain about them. Were he a Tory, I would venture to serve him, in the just expectation that, should I ever be charged with having preferred a Tory, the person, who was the author of my crime, would likewise be the author of my vindication. I am, with real esteem, Sir, your most obedient humble servant.

<sup>1</sup> The old style was usually followed in England until 1752. The Gregorian, or new style, was eleven days in advance of the old,

## DR. JOHNSON

1709-1784

IF Lord Chesterfield had never written his *Letters to his Son* he would probably be best remembered to-day through the famous letter from Dr. Johnson, now reprinted. This letter, as Boswell says, is 'so excellent a composition' that it seems a pity to deprive it of a little of its point; but after all there is something to be said for Chesterfield's attitude towards the lexicographer. Lord Chesterfield was Secretary of State in 1847, when Johnson, then only a little way up the ladder of fame, addressed the Plan, or prospectus, of his Dictionary to him. It would, of course, have been better had Chesterfield suitably responded to the flattering terms in which Johnson therein addressed him; but it must be remembered that he was then an extremely busy man, and so many dedicatory letters were addressed to him that he probably paid little attention to Johnson's association of his name with the Dictionary scheme. In any case, it was something to have lent his name to the plan; but he did more than this—he gave Johnson ten pounds; not much, as it seems to us nowadays, and so little that Johnson himself told his friend Langton that 'whereas it is said in his letter that "no assistance has been received" he did once receive from Lord Chesterfield the sum of ten pounds; but as that was so inconsiderable a sum, he thought the mention of it could not properly find a place in a letter of the kind that this was'. Yet Johnson only received ten guineas for his *London*, and, as he afterwards said to Boswell, 'might perhaps have accepted less'. Our remaining letters of Johnson, it may be assumed, need nothing beyond their annotations to explain the circumstances in which they were written.

DR. SAMUEL JOHNSON TO THE EARL OF CHESTERFIELD

[A famous letter]

February, 1775.

MY LORD,—

I have been lately informed by the proprietor of the World, that two papers, in which my Dictionary is recommended to the publick, were written by your Lordship. To be so distinguished, is an honour, which, being very little accustomed to favours from the great, I know not well how to receive, or in what terms to acknowledge.

When, upon some slight encouragement, I first visited your Lordship, I was overpowered, like the rest of mankind, by the enchantment of your address; and could not forbear to wish that I might boast myself *Le vainqueur du vainqueur de la terre*—that I might obtain that regard for which I saw the world contending; but I found my attendance so little encouraged, that neither pride nor modesty would suffer me to

continue it. When I had once addressed your Lordship in publick, I had exhausted all the art of pleasing which a retired and uncourtly scholar can possess. I had done all that I could ; and no man is well pleased to have his all neglected, be it ever so little.

Seven years, my Lord, have now past, since I waited in your outward rooms, or was repulsed from your door ; during which time I have been pushing on my work through difficulties, of which it is useless to complain, and have brought it at last, to the verge of publication, without one act of assistance, one word of encouragement, or one smile of favour. Such treatment I did not expect, for I never had a Patron before. The shepherd in Virgil grew at last acquainted with Love, and found him a native of the rocks.

Is not a Patron, my Lord, one who looks with unconcern on a man struggling for life in the water, and, when he has reached ground, encumbers him with help ? The notice which you have been pleased to take of my labours, had it been early, had been kind ; but it has been delayed till I am indifferent, and cannot enjoy it ; till I am solitary, and cannot impart it ; till I am known, and do not want it. I hope it is no every cynical asperity not to confess obligations where no benefit has been received, or to be unwilling that the publick should consider me as owing that to a Patron, which Providence has enabled me to do for myself.

Having carried on my work thus far with so little obligation to any favourer of learning, I shall not be disappointed though I should conclude it, if less be possible, with less ; for I have been long wakened from that dream of hope, in which I once boasted myself with so much exultation,

My Lord,  
Your Lordship's most humble,  
most obedient servant,  
SAM. JOHNSON.

DR. JOHNSON TO JAMES BOSWELL

[*The Beauclerks, the Thrales, Dr. Percy, and others*]

April 8, 1780.

DEAR SIR,—

Well, I had resolved to send you the Chesterfield letter ; but I will write once again without it. Never impose tasks

upon mortals. To require two things is the way to have them both undone.

For the difficulties which you mention in your affairs, I am sorry ; but difficulty is now very general : it is not therefore less grievous, for there is less hope of help. I pretend not to give you advice, not knowing the state of your affairs ; and general counsels about prudence and frugality would do you little good. You are, however, in the right not to increase your own perplexity by a journey hither ; and I hope that by staying at home you will please your father.

Poor dear Beauclerk—*nec, ut soles, dabis joca*. His wit and his folly, his acuteness and maliciousness, his merriment and reasoning, are now over. Such another will not often be found among mankind. He directed himself to be buried by the side of his mother, an instance of tenderness which I hardly expected. He has left his children to the care of Lady Di, and if she dies, of Mr. Langton, and of Mr. Leicester, his relation, and a man of good character. His library has been offered to sale to the Russian ambassador<sup>1</sup>.

Dr. Perey, notwithstanding all the noise of the newspapers, has had no literary loss.<sup>2</sup> Clothes and movables were burnt to the value of about £100 ; but his papers, and I think his books, were all preserved.

Poor Mr. Thrale has been in extreme danger from an apoplectical disorder, and recovered, beyond the expectation of his physicians ; he is now at Bath, that his mind may be quiet, and Mrs. Thrale and Miss are with him.

Having told you what has happened to your friends, let me say something to you of yourself. You are always complaining of melancholy, and I conclude from those complaints that you are fond of it. No man talks of that which he is desirous to conceal, and every man desires to conceal that of which he is ashamed. Do not pretend to deny it ; *manifestum habemus furem* ; make it an invariable and obligatory law to yourself, never to mention your own mental diseases ; if you are never to speak of them you will think on them but little, and if you think little of them, they will molest you rarely. When you talk of them, it is plain that you want either praise or

<sup>1</sup> Topham Beauclerk died March 11, 1780. His library was sold by public auction in April and May, 1781, for £5,011.

<sup>2</sup> By a fire in Northumberland House, where he had an apartment.



pity ; for praise there is no room, and pity will do you no good ; therefore, from this hour speak no more, think no more, about them.

Your transaction with Mrs. Stewart gave me great satisfaction ; I am much obliged to you for your attention. Do not lose sight of her ; your countenance may be of great credit, and of consequence of great advantage to her. The memory of her brother is yet fresh in my mind ; he was an ingenious and worthy man.

Please to make my compliments to your lady and to the young ladies. I should like to see them, pretty loves. I am, dear Sir, yours affectionately,

SAM. JOHNSON.

DR. JOHNSON TO MRS. THRALE

[*Friendship and the frequency of death*]

London, *November 13, 1783.*

DEAR MADAM,—

Since you have written to me with the attention and tenderness of ancient time, your letters give me a great part of the pleasure which a life of solitude admits. You will never bestow any share of your good-will on one who deserves better. Those that have loved longest, love best. A sudden blaze of kindness may, by a single blast of coldness, be extinguished ; but that fondness, which length of time has connected with many circumstances and occasions, though it may for awhile be suppressed by disgust or resentment, with or without a cause, is hourly revived by accidental recollection. To those that have lived long together, everything heard and everything seen recalls some pleasure communicated or some benefit conferred, some petty quarrel, or some slight endearment. Esteem of great powers, or amiable qualities newly discovered, may embroider a day or a week ; but a friendship of twenty years is interwoven with the texture of life. A friend may be often found and lost, but an *old friend* never can be found, and nature has provided that he cannot easily be lost.

I have not forgotten the Davenants, though they seem to have forgotten me. I began very early to tell them what they have commonly found to be true. I am sorry to hear of

their building. I have always warned those whom I loved against that mode of ostentatious waste.

You seem to mention Lord Kilmurry as a stranger. We were at his house in Cheshire ; and he one day dined with Sir Lynch.<sup>1</sup> What he tells of the epigram is not true, but perhaps he does not know it to be false. Do you not remember how he rejoiced in having no park ? he could not disoblige his neighbours by sending them *no* venison.

The frequency of death, to those who look upon it in the leisure of Arcadia, is very dreadful. We all know what it should teach us ; let us all be diligent to learn. Lucy Porter has lost her brother. But whom I have lost—let me not now remember.

Let not your loss be added to the mournful catalogue. Write soon again to,

Madam,  
Yours, etc.

DR. JOHNSON TO MRS. PIOZZI <sup>2</sup>

[*His wrath at Mrs. Thrale's second marriage*]

July 2, 1784.

MADAM,—

If I interpret your letter right, you are ignominiously married : if it is yet undone, let us *once* more *talk* together. If you have abandoned your children and your religion, God forgive your wickedness ; if you have forfeited your fame

<sup>1</sup> Sir Lynch Cotton. See Johnson's *Journal of the Tour to Wales*.

<sup>2</sup> Mrs. Piozzi, in reply, sent Johnson the following letter :—*July 4, 1784.* 'Sir,—I have this morning received from you so rough a letter in reply to one which was both tenderly and respectfully written, that I am forced to desire the conclusion of a correspondence which I can bear to continue no longer. The birth of my second husband is not meaner than that of my first ; his sentiments are not meaner ; his profession is not meaner, and his superiority in what he professes acknowledged by all mankind. It is want of fortune, then, that is ignominious ; the character of the man I have chosen has no other claim to such an epithet. The religion to which he has been always a zealous adherent will, I hope, teach him to forgive insults he has not deserved ; mine will, I hope, enable me to bear them at once with dignity and patience. To hear that I have forfeited my fame is indeed the greatest insult I ever yet received. My fame is as unsullied as snow, or I should think it unworthy of him who must henceforth protect it. I write by the coach the more speedily and effectually to prevent your coming hither. Perhaps by my fame (and I hope it is so) you mean only that celebrity which is a consideration of a much lower kind. I care for that only as it may give pleasure to my husband and his friends. Farewell, dear Sir, and accept my best wishes. You have always commanded my esteem, and long enjoyed the fruits of a friendship, *never infringed by one harsh expression on my part during twenty years of familiar talk. Never did I oppose your will, nor can your unmerited severity itself lessen my regard ; but till you have changed your opinion of Mr. Piozzi, let us converse no more. God bless you* ' .

and your country, may your folly do no further mischief. If the last act is yet to do, I who have loved you, esteemed you, revered you, and *served you*, I who long thought you the first of womankind, entreat that, before your fate is irrevocable, I may once more see you. I was, I once was, Madam, most truly yours,

SAM. JOHNSON.

I will come down, if you will permit it.

DR. JOHNSON TO MRS. PIOZZI

[*'One sigh more of tenderness'*]

London, July 8, 1784.

DEAR MADAM,—

What you have done, however I may lament it, I have no pretence to resent, as it has not been injurious to me. I therefore breathe out one sigh more of tenderness, perhaps useless, but at least sincere. I wish that God may grant you every blessing, that you may be happy in this world for its short continuance, and eternally happy in a better state; and whatever I can contribute to your happiness I am very ready to repay, for that kindness which soothed twenty years of a life radically wretched.

Do not think slightly of the advice which I now presume to offer. Prevail upon Mr. Piozzi to settle in England: you may live here with more dignity than in Italy, and with more security; your rank will be higher, and your fortune more under your own eye. I desire not to detail all my reasons, but every argument of prudence and interest is for England, and only some phantoms of imagination seduce you to Italy. I am afraid, however, that my counsel is vain, yet I have eased my heart by giving it.

When Queen Mary took the resolution of sheltering herself in England, the Archbishop of St. Andrews, attempting to dissuade her, attended on her journey; and when they came to the irremeable stream that separated the two Kingdoms, walked by her side into the water, in the middle of which he seized her bridle, and with earnestness proportioned to her danger and his own affection pressed her to return. The Queen went forward.—If the parallel reaches thus far, may it go no farther.—The tears stand in my eyes.

I am going into Derbyshire, and hope to be followed by your good wishes, for I am, with great affection,

Yours, etc.

DR. JOHNSTON 'A MR. ——— BOSWELL, À LA COUR DE  
L'EMPEREUR, UTRECHT ' <sup>1</sup>

[*Friendly advice*]

London, *December 8, 1763.*

DEAR SIR,—

You are not to think yourself forgotten, or criminally neglected, that you have had yet no letter from me. I love to see my friends, to hear from them, to talk to them, and to talk of them ; but it is not without a considerable effort of resolution that I prevail upon myself to write. I would not, however, gratify my own indolence by the omission of any important duty, or any office of real kindness.

To tell you that I am or am not well, that I have or have not been in the country, that I drank your health in the room in which we last sat together, and that your acquaintance continue to speak of you with their former kindness, topics with which those letters are commonly filled which are written only for the sake of writing, I seldom shall think worth communicating ; but if I can have it in my power to calm any harassing disquiet, to excite any virtuous desire, to rectify any important opinion, or fortify any generous resolution, you need not doubt but I shall at least wish to prefer the pleasure of gratifying a friend much less esteemed than yourself, before the gloomy calm of idle vacancy. Whether I shall easily arrive at an exact punctuality of correspondence, I cannot tell. I shall, at present, expect that you will receive this in return for two which I have had from you. The first, indeed, gave me an account so hopeless of the state of your mind, that it hardly admitted or deserved an answer ; by the second I was much better pleased ; and the pleasure will still be increased by such a narrative of the progress of your studies, as may evince the continuance of an equal and rational application of your mind to some useful inquiry.

<sup>1</sup> Boswell, who did not make Johnson's acquaintance until this year, went to Utrecht to study civil law.

You will, perhaps, wish to ask, what study I would recommend. I shall not speak of theology, because it ought not to be considered as a question whether you shall endeavour to know the will of God.

I shall, therefore, consider only such studies as we are at liberty to pursue or to neglect ; and of these I know not how you will make a better choice, than by studying the civil law as your father advises, and the ancient languages, as you had determined for yourself ; at least resolve, while you remain, in any settled residence, to spend a certain number of hours every day amongst your books. The dissipation of thought of which you complain, is nothing more than the vacillation of a mind suspended between different motives, and changing its direction as any motive gains or loses strength. If you can but kindle in your mind any strong desire, if you can but keep predominant any wish for some particular excellence or attainment, the gusts of imagination will break away, without any effect upon your conduct, and commonly without any traces left upon the memory.

There lurks, perhaps, in every human heart a desire of distinction, which inclines every man first to hope, and then to believe, that Nature has given him something peculiar to himself. This vanity makes one mind nurse aversion, and another actuate desires, till they rise by art much above their original state of power ; and as affectation in time improves to habit, they at last tyrannize over him who at first encouraged them only for show. Every desire is a viper in the bosom, who, while he was chill, was harmless ; but when warmth gave him strength, exerted it in poison. You know a gentleman<sup>1</sup>, who, when first he set his foot in the gay world, as he prepared himself to whirl in the vortex of pleasure, imagined a total indifference and universal negligence to be the most agreeable concomitants of youth, and the strongest indication of an airy temper and a quick apprehension. Vacant to every object, and sensible of every impulse, he thought that all appearance of diligence would deduct something from the reputation of genius ; and hoped that he should appear to attain, amidst all the ease of carelessness, and all the tumult of diversion, that knowledge and

<sup>1</sup> Boswell himself.



those accomplishments which mortals of the common fabric obtain only by mute abstraction and solitary drudgery. He tried this scheme of life awhile, was made weary of it by his sense and his virtue ; he then wished to return to his studies ; and finding long habits of idleness and pleasure harder to be cured than he expected, still willing to retain his claim to some extraordinary prerogatives, resolved the common consequences of irregularity into an unalterable decree of destiny, and concluded that Nature had originally formed him incapable of rational employment.

Let all such fancies, illusive and destructive, be banished henceforward from your thoughts for ever. Resolve, and keep your resolution ; choose, and pursue your choice. If you spend this day in study, you will find yourself still more able to study to-morrow ; not that you are to expect that you shall at once obtain a complete victory. Depravity is not very easily overcome. Resolution will sometimes relax, and diligence will sometimes be interrupted ; but let no accidental surprise or deviation, whether short or long, dispose you to despondency. Consider these failings as incident to all mankind. Begin again where you left off, and endeavour to avoid the seducements that prevailed over you before.

This, my dear Boswell, is advice which, perhaps, has been often given you, and given you without effect. But this advice, if you will not take from others, you must take from your own reflections, if you purpose to do the duties of the station to which the bounty of Providence has called you.

Let me have a long letter from you as soon as you can. I hope you continue your journal, and enrich it with many observations upon the country in which you reside. It will be a favour if you can get me any books in the Frisick language, and can inquire how the poor are maintained in the Seven Provinces. I am, dear Sir, your most affectionate servant,

SAM. JOHNSON.

DR. JOHNSON TO JAMES BOSWELL

[*His dictionary, and other news*]

London, February 22, 1773.

DEAR SIR,—

I have read your kind letter much more than the elegant Pindar which it accompanied. I am always glad to find

myself not forgotten ; and to be forgotten by you would give me great uncasiness. My northern friends have never been unkind to me : I have from you, dear Sir, testimonies of affection, which I have not often been able to excite ; and Dr. Beattie rates the testimony which I was desirous of paying to his merit, much higher than I should have thought it reasonable to expect.

I have heard of your masquerade.<sup>1</sup> What says your synod to such innovations ? I am not studiously scrupulous, nor do I think a masquerade either evil in itself, or very likely to be the occasion of evil ; yet as the world thinks it a very licentious relaxation of manners, I would not have been one of the *first* masquers in a country where no masquerade had ever been before.

A new edition of my great Dictionary is printed, from a copy which I was persuaded to revise ; but having made no preparation, I was able to do very little. Some superfluities I have expunged, and some faults I have corrected, and here and there have scattered a remark ; but the main fabric of the work remains as it was. I had looked very little into it since I wrote it, and, I think, I found it full as often better, as worse, than I expected.

Baretti and Davies have had a furious quarrel ; a quarrel, I think, irreconcilable. Dr. Goldsmith has a new comedy<sup>2</sup> which is expected in the spring. No name is yet given it. The chief diversion arises from a stratagem by which a lover is made to mistake his future father-in-law's house for an inn. This, you see, borders upon farce. The dialogue is quick and gay, and the incidents are so prepared as not to seem improbable.

I am sorry that you lost your cause of Intromission, because I yet think the arguments on your side unanswerable. But you seem, I think, to say that you gained reputation even by your defeat ; and reputation you will daily gain, if you keep Lord Auchinleck's precept in your mind, and endeavour to consolidate in your mind a firm and regular system of law, instead of picking up occasional fragments.

My health seems in general to improve ; but I have been

<sup>1</sup> Given by the Countess Dowager of Fife at Edinburgh ; Boswell went as a Dumb Conjuror.

<sup>2</sup> *She Stoops to Conquer*, produced at Covent Garden on March 15, 1773.

troubled for many weeks with a vexatious catarrh, which is sometimes sufficiently distressful. I have not found any great effects from bleeding and physic, and am afraid that I must expect help from brighter days and softer air.

Write to me now and then ; and whenever any good befalls you, make haste and let me know it, for no one will rejoice at it more than, dear Sir, your most humble servant.

SAM. JOHNSON.

You continue to stand very high in the favour of Mrs. Thrale.

DR. JOHNSON TO JAMES BOSWELL

[*Macpherson and his Ossianic poems*<sup>1</sup>]

February 7, 1775.

MY DEAR BOSWELL,—

I am surprised that, knowing as you do the disposition of your countrymen to tell lies in favour of each other,<sup>2</sup> you can be at all affected by any reports that circulate among them. Macpherson never in his life offered me a sight of any original, or of any evidence of any kind ; but thought only of intimidating me by noise and threats, till my last answer,—that I would not be deterred from detecting what I thought a cheat, by the menaces of a ruffian—put an end to our correspondence.

The state of the question is this. He, and Dr. Blair, whom I consider as deceived, say, that he copied the poem from old manuscripts. His copies, if he had them, and I believe him to have none, are nothing. Where are the manuscripts ? They can be shewn if they exist, but they were never shewn. *De non existentibus et non apparentibus*, says our law, *eadem est ratio*. No man has a claim to credit upon his own word, when better evidence, if he had it, may be easily produced. But, so far as we can find, the Erse language was never written till very lately for the purposes of religion. A nation that cannot write, or a language that was never written, has no manuscripts.

But whatever he has he never offered to shew. If old manuscripts should now be mentioned, I should, unless there were more evidence than can be easily had, suppose them

<sup>1</sup> See p. 238.

<sup>2</sup> 'My friend', writes Boswell, in a characteristic footnote to this letter, 'relied upon my testimony with a confidence of which the ground has escaped my recollection'.

another proof of Scotch conspiracy in national falsehood. Do not censure the expression ; you know it to be true.

Dr. Memis's question is so narrow as to allow no speculation ; and I have no facts before me but those which his advocate has produced against you. . . . I am now engaged, but in a little time I hope to do all you would have. My compliments to Madam and Veronica. I am, Sir, your most humble servant,  
SAM. JOHNSON.

## JAMES BOSWELL

1740-1795

BOSWELL's prostrate attitude before Johnson is as clearly shown in his letters as in his great biography—in which many of them are incorporated. Goldsmith's description of him is as good as anybody's. 'Some one, under momentary irritation, I forget now on what occasion', relates his contemporary, John Wilkes, 'called him a "Scotch cur"'. "No, no", replied Goldsmith, playing on the word, "You are too severe ; he is merely a Scotch *bur*". Tom Davies threw him at Johnson in sport, and he has the faculty of *sticking* ". Much may be forgiven the man, however, who has written the finest biography in the language. Boswell was barely twenty-four when he made his vow of 'eternal attachment' to Dr. Johnson, who was then fifty-five. They met each other for the first time about eighteen months before in the back-parlour of Tom Davies' book-shop in Russell Street. It was this Tom Davies who afterwards published a pirated edition of Johnson's writings ; but the Doctor forgave him.

## JAMES BOSWELL TO SAMUEL JOHNSON

[*His vow of 'eternal attachment'*]

Sunday, September 30, 1764.

MY EVER DEAR AND MUCH-RESPECTED SIR,—

You know my solemn enthusiasm of mind. You love me for it, and I respect myself for it, because in so far I resemble Mr. Johnson. You will be agreeably surprised, when you learn the reason of my writing this letter. I am at Wittemberg in Saxony.<sup>1</sup> I am in the old church where the Reformation was first preached, and where some of the Reformers lie

<sup>1</sup> Boswell went to Utrecht to study civil law in the summer of 1765, afterwards proceeding on an extended tour through Germany, Switzerland and Italy—including Corsica, where a letter of introduction from Rousseau led to his long association with Paoli the famous Corsican patriot. Boswell's *Account of Corsica* appeared in 1768.

interred. I cannot resist the serious pleasure of writing to Mr. Johnson from the tomb of Melancthon. My paper rests upon the grave-stone of that great and good man, who was undoubtedly the worthiest of all the reformers. He wished to reform abuses which had been introduced into the Church ; but had no private resentment to gratify. So mild was he, that when his aged mother consulted him with anxiety on the perplexing disputes of the times, he advised her 'to keep to the old religion'. At this tomb, then, my ever dear and respected friend ! I vow to thee an eternal attachment. It shall be my study to do what I can to render your life happy : and if you die before me, I shall endeavour to do honour to your memory ; and, elevated by the remembrance of you, persist in noble piety. May God, the father of all beings, ever bless you ! and may you continue to love your most affectionate friend, and devoted servant, James Boswell.

JAMES BOSWELL TO DR. JOHNSON

[*Thomson, Hume, and Dr. Dodd*]

July 9, 1777.

MY DEAR SIR,—

For the health of my wife and children<sup>1</sup> I have taken the little country house at which you visited my uncle, Dr. Boswell, who having lost his wife is gone to live with his son. We took possession of our villa about a week ago ; we have a garden of three quarters of an acre, well stocked with fruit-trees and flowers, and gooseberries and currants, and pease and beans, and cabbages, etc. etc., and my children are quite happy. I now write to you in a little study, from the window of which I see around me a verdant grove, and beyond it the lofty mountain called Arthur's Seat.

Your last letter, in which you desire me to send you some additional information concerning Thomson, reached me very fortunately just as I was going to Lanark, to put my wife's two nephews, the young Campbells, to school there, under the care of Mr. Thomson, the master of it, whose wife is sister

<sup>1</sup> Boswell had been married between seven and eight years when this letter was written. His wife was his cousin, Margaret Montgomery, an excellent woman, but no lover of Johnson. She bore her husband seven children.



to the author of *The Seasons*. She is an old woman ; but her memory is very good ; and she will with pleasure give me for you every particular that you wish to know, and she can tell. . . . As Thomson never returned to Scotland (which *you* will think very wise), his sister can speak from her own knowledge only as to the early part of his life. She has some letters from him, which may probably give light as to his more advanced progress, if she will let us see them, which I suppose she will. I believe George Lewis Scott and Dr. Armstrong are now his only surviving companions, while he lived in and about London ; and they, I dare say, can tell more of him than is yet known. My own notion is, that Thomson was a much coarser man than his friends are willing to acknowledge. His *Seasons* are indeed full of elegant and pious sentiments : but a rank soil, nay, a dunghill, will produce beautiful flowers.

Your edition of the *English Poets* <sup>1</sup> will be very valuable on account of the *Prefaces and Lives*. But I have seen a specimen of an edition of the Poets at the Apollo press, at Edinburgh, which, for excellence in printing and engraving, highly deserves a liberal encouragement.

I cannot believe that the prologue which you generously gave to Mr. Kelly's widow and children the other day, is the effusion of one in sickness and in disquietude ; but external circumstances are never sure indications of the state of man. I send you a letter which I wrote to you two years ago at Wilton : and did not send it at the time, for fear of being reproved as indulging too much tenderness ; and one written to you at the tomb of Melancthon, which I kept back lest I should appear at once too superstitious and too enthusiastic. I now imagine that perhaps they may please you.

You do not take the least notice of my proposal for our meeting at Carlisle. Though I have meritoriously refrained from visiting London this year, I ask you if it would not be wrong that I should be two years without having the benefit of your conversation, when, if you come down as far as Derbyshire, we may meet at the expense of a few days' journeying, and not many pounds. I wish you to see Carlisle, which made me mention that place. But if you have not a desire

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Johnson was not the *editor* of this collection of the English Poets ; he merely furnished the biographical prefaces.

to complete your tour of the English Cathedrals, I will take a larger share of the road between this place and Ashbourne. So tell me *where* you will fix for our passing a few days by ourselves. Now don't cry 'foolish fellow', or 'idle dog'.<sup>1</sup> Chain your humour, and let your kindness play.

Without doubt you have read what is called *The LIFE of David Hume*,<sup>2</sup> written by himself, with the letter from Dr. Adam Smith subjoined to it. Is not this an age of daring effrontery? My friend Mr. Anderson, Professor of Natural Philosophy at Glasgow, at whose house you and I supped, and to whose care Mr. Windham, of Norfolk, was intrusted at that University, paid me a visit lately; and after we had talked with indignation and contempt of the poisonous productions with which this age is infested, he said there was now an excellent opportunity for Dr. Johnson to step forth. I agreed with him that you might knock Hume's and Smith's heads together, and make vain and ostentatious infidelity exceedingly ridiculous. Would it not be worth your while to crush such noxious weeds in the moral garden?

You have said nothing to me of Dr. Dodd<sup>3</sup>. I know not how you think on that subject; though the newspapers give us a saying of yours in favour of mercy to him. But I own I am very desirous that the royal prerogative of remission of punishment, should be employed to exhibit an illustrious instance of the regard which GOD'S VICEGERENT will ever shew to piety and virtue. If for ten righteous men the ALMIGHTY would have spared Sodom, shall not a thousand acts of goodness done by Dr. Dodd counterbalance one crime? Such an instance would do more to encourage goodness, than his execution would do to deter from vice. I am not afraid of any bad consequence to society; for who will persevere for a long course of years in a distinguished discharge of religious duties, with a view to commit a forgery with impunity?

Pray make my best compliments acceptable to Mr. and Mrs. Thrale, by assuring them of my hearty joy that the

<sup>1</sup> Johnson, apparently, had himself talked of seeing Carlisle with Boswell.

<sup>2</sup> David Hume, whose autobiography appeared with Adam Smith's letter and essays on *Suicide and Immortality*, died during August of the preceding year.

<sup>3</sup> Dr. William Dodd, scholar, forger, and at one time chaplain to the king. He was executed for forging a bond for £4,200 in the name of his former pupil, the fifth Lord Chesterfield, though many powerful petitions were signed in his favour—one being written by Dr. Johnson.

*Master*, as you call him, is alive. I hope I shall often taste his champagne—*soberly*.

Studious the busy moments to deceive. . . .

I remain, my dear Sir, your most affectionate and faithful humble servant,

JAMES BOSWELL.

JAMES BOSWELL TO DR. JOHNSON

[*His thankfulness for their friendship*]

August 24, 1780.

My brother David and I find the long indulged fancy of our comfortable meeting again at Auchinleck, so well realized, that it in some degree confirms the pleasing hope of *O ! preclarum diem !* in a future state.

I beg that you may never again harbour a suspicion of my indulging a peevish humour, or playing tricks ; you will recollect, that when I confessed to you, that I had once been intentionally silent to try your regard, I gave you my word and honour that I would not do so again.

I rejoice to hear of your good state of health : I pray God to continue it long.<sup>1</sup> I have often said, that I would willingly have ten years added to my life, to have ten taken from yours ; I mean, that I would be ten years older to have you ten years younger. But let me be thankful for the years during which I have enjoyed your friendship, and please myself with the hopes of enjoying it many years to come in this state of being, trusting always, that in another state, we shall meet never to be separated. Of this we can form no notion ; but the thought, though indistinct, is delightful, when the mind is calm and clear.

The riots in London were certainly horrible ; but you give me no account of your own situation during the barbarous

<sup>1</sup> Johnson lived about four years longer. His last meeting with Boswell was at a dinner at Sir Joshua Reynolds' early in 1784.

anarchy. A description of it by Dr. JOHNSON would be a great painting<sup>1</sup>: you might write another 'LONDON, A POEM'.

I am charmed with your condescending affectionate expression, 'let us keep each other's kindness by all the means in our power': my revered friend! how elevating it is to my mind, that I am found worthy to be a companion to Dr. Samuel Johnson! All that you have said in grateful praise of Mr. Walmsley I have long thought of you: but we are both Tories, which has a very general influence upon our sentiments. I hope that you will agree to meet me at York, about the end of this month; or if you will come to Carlisle, that would be better still, in case the Dean be there. Please to consider, that to keep each other's kindness, we should every year have that free and intimate communication of mind which can be had only when we are together. We should have both our solemn and our pleasant talk.

I write now for the third time, to tell you that my desire for our meeting this autumn is much increased. I wrote to Squire Godfrey Bosville, my Yorkshire chief, that I should, perhaps, pay him a visit, as I was to hold a conference with Dr. Johnson at York. I give you my word and honour that I said not a word of his inviting you; but he wrote to me as follows:

'I need not tell you I shall be happy to see you here the latter end of this month, as you propose; and I shall likewise be in hopes that you will persuade Dr. Johnson to finish the conference here. It will add to the favour of your own company, if you prevail upon such an associate to assist your observations. I have often been entertained with his writings, and I once belonged to a club of which he was a member, and I never spent an evening there, but I heard something from him well worth remembering.'

We have thus, my dear Sir, good comfortable quarters in the neighbourhood of York, where you may be assured we shall be heartily welcome. I pray you then resolve to set out; and let not the year 1780 be a blank in our social calendar, and in that record of wisdom and wit, which I keep with so much diligence, to your honour, and the instruction and delight of others.

<sup>1</sup> Boswell had not then seen Johnson's letters to Mrs. Thrale, in which the doctor gives a graphic account of the Gordon Riots.

## HENRY FIELDING

1707-1754

LETTERS of Henry Fielding are, unfortunately, extremely rare. The following letter to the Hon. George Lyttleton, afterwards Baron Lyttleton, is preserved in Phillimore's *Memoirs of Lyttleton*, and was written six months after the publication of *Tom Jones*. Lyttleton was one of Fielding's schoolfellows at Eton and a generous friend in later life. 'This History', writes Fielding, in dedicating *Tom Jones* to him, 'without your assistance had never been completed', while another sentence leads one to suppose that it was Lyttleton who suggested the writing of the book. Certainly it was by Lyttleton's interest that Fielding, in the year previously, became a Justice of the Peace. The second letter takes us to that last expedition in search of health which Fielding has himself described in his pathetic *Journal of a Voyage to Lisbon*—'one of the most unfeigned and touching little tracts'—to quote from Mr. Austin Dobson's brilliant study of the novelist, 'in our own or any other literature'. Fielding only lived long enough to complete his *Journal*, dying at Lisbon on October 8, 1754.

BY HENRY FIELDING TO THE HON. GEORGE LYTTLETON  
—AFTERWARDS BARON LYTTLETON

[*Congratulations on his Second Marriage*]

Bow Street, August 29, 1749.<sup>1</sup>

SIR,—

Permit me to bring up the rear of your friends in paying my compliments of congratulation on your late happy nuptials. There may, perhaps, be seasons when the rear may be as honourable a post in friendship as in war; and if so, such certainly must be every time of joy and felicity. Your present situation must be full of bliss; and so will be, I am confident, your future life from the same fountain. Nothing can equal the excellent character your lady bears amongst those of her own sex, and I never yet knew them speak well of a woman who did not deserve their good words. How admirable is your fortune in the matrimonial lottery! I will venture to say there is no man alive who exults more in this, or in any other happiness that can attend you, than myself, and you ought to believe me from the same reason that fully persuades me of the satisfaction you receive from any happiness of mine; this reason is that you must be sensible how much of it I owe to your goodness; and there is a great pleasure in gratitude, though I believe it second to that of benevolence; for of all the delights upon earth, none can equal the raptures which a good mind feels in conferring happiness on those whom we

<sup>1</sup> Fielding was at this time paid magistrate for Middlesex,



think worthy of it. This is the sweetest ingredient in power, and I solemnly protest I never wished for power more than a few days ago, for the sake of a man whom I love, the more, perhaps, from the esteem I know he bears you than any other reason. This man is in love with a young creature of the most apparent worth who returns his affections. Nothing is wanting to make two very miserable people extremely blest, but a moderate portion of the greatest of human evils, so philosophers call it, and so it is called by divines, whose word is the rather to be taken as they are many of them more conversant with this evil than even the philosophers were. The name of this man is Moore,<sup>1</sup> to whom you kindly destined the laurel, which, though it hath long been withered, may not probably soon drop from the brow of its present possessor. But there is another place of much the same value now vacant : it is that of deputy licenser to the stage. Be not offended at this hint ; for though I will own it impudent enough in one who hath so many obligations of his own to you to venture to recommend another man to your favour, yet impudence itself may possibly be a virtue when exerted on behalf of a friend : at least I am the less ashamed of it, as I have known men remarkable for the opposite modesty, possess it without the mixture of any other quality. In this fault, then, you must indulge me ; for should I ever see you as high in power as I wish, and as it is perhaps more my interest than your own that you should be, I shall be guilty of the like as often as I find a man in whom I can, after much intimacy, discover no want but that of the evil above mentioned. I beg you will do me the honour of making my compliments to your unknown lady, and believe me to be, with the highest esteem, respect, and gratitude, Sir, your most obliged, most obedient, humble servant,

HENRY FIELDING.

HENRY FIELDING TO HIS BROTHER JOHN FIELDING

[*The last letter which he is known to have written*]<sup>2</sup>

On board the *Queen of Portugal*, Rich<sup>d</sup>. Veal  
at anchor on the Mother Bank, off Ryde,  
to the Care of the Postmaster of Ports-  
mouth—this is my Date and y<sup>r</sup>. Direction.

<sup>1</sup> Edward Moore, fabulist and dramatist (1712-1757). Editor of the *World*, a satirical periodical published from 1753 until his death, and author of *The Gamester* and other plays. Fielding's appeal was not sent in vain.

<sup>2</sup> This letter was first published in Jesse's *Memoirs of Celebrated Etonians*, in 1875.

DEAR JACK,—

July 12, 1754.

After receiving that agreeable Lre from Messrs. Fielding & Co., we weighed on Monday morning and sailed from Deal to the Westward. Four Days long but inconceivably pleasant Passage brought us yesterday to an Anchor on the Mother Bank, on the Back of the Isle of Wight, where we had last Night in Safety the Pleasure of hearing the Winds roar over our Heads in as violent a Tempest as I have known, and where my only Consideration were the Fears which must possess any Friend of ours, (if there is happily any such) who really makes our Well-being the Object of his Concern, especially if such Friend should be totally inexperienced in Sea Affairs. I therefore beg that on the Day you receive this Mrs. Daniel<sup>1</sup> may know that we are just risen from Breakfast in Health and Spirits this twelfth Instant at 9 in the morning. Our Voyage hath proved fruitful in Adventures, all which being to be written in the Book,<sup>2</sup> you must postpone your Curiosity. As the Incidents which fall under yr. Cognizance will possibly be consigned to Oblivion, do give them to us as they pass. Tell yr. Neighbour I am much obliged to him for recommending me to the Care of a most able and experienced Seaman, to whom other Captains seem to pay such Deference that they attend and watch his Motions, and think only safe when they act under his Direction and Example. Our Ship in Truth seems to give Laws on the Water with as much Authority and Superiority as you Dispense Laws to the Public and Example to yr. Brethren in Commission. Please to direct yr. Answer to me on Board as in the Date, if gone to be returned, and then send it by the Post and Pacquet to Lisbon to

Yr affect. Brother,  
H. FIELDING.

To John Fielding, Esq., at his House in Bow Street, Covent Garden, London.

It was reprinted by Mr. Austin Dobson in his Chiswick Press edition of *The Journal of a Voyage to Lisbon* (1892), from a collation made with the original letter, and we owe it to Mr. Austin Dobson's courtesy that we are able to reproduce it in its present form. Jesse's version is slightly inaccurate, though, as Mr. Austin Dobson points out, by reading 'that agreeable Lre' as 'that agreeable £10,' he perhaps succeeded in making it more in keeping with Fielding's traditional character.

<sup>1</sup> Fielding's mother-in-law.

<sup>2</sup> His posthumously published *Journal*.

## LAURENCE STERNE

1713-1768

LOVE letters have been avoided in this work as far as possible, but no estimate of Sterne would be complete without taking his long succession of unsatisfying amours into consideration. 'Yorick's Letters to Eliza' are well known, but the *billet-doux* here included is the earlier letter to 'Lady P.' of which Thackerary made so much. This letter, as Mr. Percy Fitzgerald says in his life of Sterne, might be accepted as a picture of the sentimental struggle that was going on in his mind all through his life. Something of the same exaggerated fondness for the fair sex is expressed in the letter to his intimate friend Garrick, whose wife, the beautiful Violette—'My Minerva'—appears to have understood and appreciated him fully, often taking him to task for his follies. When this letter was written, Garrick was on the continent, where he had been living since the autumn of 1763. Powell, to whom Sterne alludes, is described as 'a young man from Sir Robert Ladbroke's counting-house in the city; with slender education, few means of study, not striking in his person, but possessing an ardent love for acting, and the faculty of strongly interesting the passions of the audience'. Sterne had just finished *Tristram Shandy* about this time, and six months later he set out on the continental tour which was to lead to the *Sentimental Journey*. The next letter is taken from his interesting correspondence with Ignatius Sancho, an emancipated negro who had written to thank Sterne for the remarks in one of his sermons on the evils and injustice of slavery. The remaining letters bring poor Yorick to his melancholy end. Parted from his idol, Eliza Draper—'the Brahmine' as he called her—owing to her return to her husband in India, and now permanently separated from his wife and his beloved daughter, he died of pleurisy in his Old Bond Street lodgings, with only his landlady, and a footman who had been sent to inquire after his health, to witness his end. This happened but three days after he had written the last pathetic letter to Mrs. James, who, with her husband, had been a warm friend of both Sterne and Mrs. Draper.

## LAURENCE STERNE TO 'LADY P.'

[*'The most tender fool that ever woman tried the weakness of'*]

Mount Coffee-house, Tuesday, 3 o'clock.

THERE is a strange mechanical effect produced in writing a *billet-doux* within a stone-cast of the lady who engrosses the heart and soul of an innamorato. For this cause (but mostly because I am to dine in this neighbourhood) have I, Tristram Shandy, come forth from my lodgings to a coffee-house, the nearest I could find to my dear Lady——'s house, and have called for a sheet of gilt paper, to try the truth of this article of my creed. Now for it——

O my dear lady, what a dishelout of a soul hast thou made of me ! I think, by the bye, this is a little too familiar an introduction for so unfamiliar a situation—as I stand in with you—where, heaven knows, I am kept at a distanee—and despair of getting one inch nearer you, with all the steps and windings I can think of to recommend myself to you. Would not any man in his senses run diametrically from you—and as far as his legs would carry him, rather than thus causelessly, foolishly, and foolhardily expose himself afresh—and afresh, where his heart and his reason tell him he shall be sure to come off loser, if not totally undonc ? Why would you tell me you would be glad to see me ? Does it give you pleasure to make me more happy—or does it add to your triumph, that your eyes and lips have turned a man into a fool, whom the rest of the town is courting as a wit ? I am a fool—the weakest, the most ductile, the most tender fool, that ever woman tried the weakness of—and the most unsettled in my purposes and resolutions of recovering my right mind.—It is but an hour ago, that I kneeled down and swore I never would come near you—and after saying my Lord’s Prayer for the sake of the elose, *of not being led into temptation*—out I sallied like any Christian hero, ready to take the field against the world, the flesh and the devil ; not doubting that I should finally trample them all down under my feet ; and now I am got so near you—within this vile stone’s east of your house—I feel myself drawn into a vortex, that has turned my brain upside downwards, and though I had purchased a box ticket to carry me to Miss ——’s benefit, yet I know very well, that was a single line directed to me, to let me know Lady —— would be alone at seven, and suffer me to spend the evening with her, she would infallibly see everything verified I have told her.—I dine at Mr. C——r’s in Wigmore Street, in this neighbourhood, where I shall stay till seven in hopes you propose to put me to this proof. If I hear nothing by that time, I shall conclude that you are better disposed of—and shall take a sorry hack, and sorrily jog on to the play—course on the word. I know nothing but sorrow—except this one thing, that I love you (perhaps foolishly, but)

most sincerely,

L. STERNE.

## LAURENCE STERNE TO DAVID GARRICK

[*Begs him to return to England*]

Bath, *April 6, 1765.*

I SCALP you ! my dear Garrick !—my dear friend ! foul befall the man who hurts a hair of your head !—and so full was I of that very sentiment, that my letter had not been put into the post-office ten minutes, before my heart smote me ; and I sent to recall it—but failed. You are sadly to blame, Shandy ! for this, quoth I, leaning with my head on my hand, as I recriminated upon my false delicacy in the affair. Garrick's nerves, (if he has any left,) are as fine and delicately spun as thy own—his sentiments as honest and friendly ; thou knowest, Shandy, that he loves thee—why wilt thou hazard him a moment's pain ? Puppy ! fool ! coxcomb ! jackass ! etc. etc. ; and so I balanced the account to your favour, before I received it drawn up in your way. I say your way—for it is not stated so much to your honour and credit, as I had passed the account before ; for it was a most lamented truth, that I never received one of the letters your friendship meant me, except whilst in Paris. O ! how I congratulate you for the anxiety the world has, and continues to be under, for your return. Return—return to the few who love you, and the thousands who admire you. The moment you set your foot upon your stage—mark ! I tell it you, by some magic, irresistible power, every fibre about your heart will vibrate afresh, and as strong and feelingly as ever. Nature, with Glory at her back, will light up the torch within you ; and there is enough of it left, to heat and enlighten the world these many, many, many years.

Heaven be praised ! (I utter it from my soul) that your lady and Minerva, is in a condition to walk to Windsor—full rapturously will I lead the graceful pilgrim to the temple, where I will sacrifice with the purest incense to her ; but you may worship with me, or not, 'twill make no difference either in the truth or warmth of my devotion ; still, (after all I have seen) I still maintain her peerless.

Powell—good heaven ! give me some one with less smoke and more fire. There are those, who, like the Pharisees, still think



they shall be heard for *much* speaking. Come—come away, my dear Garriek, and teach us another lesson.

Adieu!—I love you dearly—and your lady better—not hobihorsically—but most sentimentally and affectionately—for I am yours, (that is, if you never say another word about —) with all the sentiments of love and friendship you deserve from me.

LAURENCE STERNE TO IGNATIUS SANCHE

[*The injustice of Slavery*]

Coxwold, *July 27, 1766.*

THERE is a strange coincidence, Sancho, in the little events (as well as in the great ones) of this world ; for I had been writing a tender tale of the sorrows of a friendless poor negro-girl ; and my eyes had scarce done smarting with it, when your letter of recommendation, in behalf of so many of her brethren and sisters, came to me ;—but why her brethren ?—or yours, Sancho,—any more than mine ?

It is by the finest tints and most insensible gradations that Nature descends from the fairest face about St. James's to the sootiest complexion in Africa.—At which tint of these is it, that the ties of blood are to cease ? and how many shades must we descend lower still in the scale, ere mercy is to vanish with them ? But 'tis no uncommon thing, my good Sancho, for one half of the world to use the other half of it like brutes, and then endeavour to make them so. For my own part, I never look westward (when I am in a pensive mood at least) but I think of the burdens which our brothers and sisters are there carrying ; and, could I ease their shoulders from one ounce of them, I declare I would set out this hour upon a pilgrimage to Mecca for their sakes ; which, by the bye, Sancho, exceeds your walk of ten miles in about the same proportion that a visit of humanity should one of mere form.—However, if you meant my Uncle Toby, more he is your debtor. If I can weave the tale I have wrote into the work I am about, 'tis at the service of the afflicted—and a much greater matter ; for, in serious truth, it casts a sad shade upon the world, that so great a part of it are, and have been so long, bound in chains of darkness, and in chains of misery,

and I cannot but both respect and felicitate you, that, by so much laudable diligence, you have broke the one ;—and that, by falling into the hands of so good and merciful a family, Providence has rescued you from the other.

And so, good-hearted Sancho, adieu ! and, believe me, I will not forget your letter.

Yours,

L. STERNE.

LAURENCE STERNE TO HIS DAUGHTER LYDIA

[*'A thousand melancholy ideas'*]

Bond Street, *April* 9, 1767.

THIS letter, my dear Lydia, will distress thy good heart ; for, from the beginning, thou wilt perceive no entertaining strokes of humour in it. I cannot be cheerful when a thousand melancholy ideas surround me. I have met with a loss of near fifty pounds, which I was taken in for in an extraordinary manner—but what is that loss in comparison of one I may experience ? Friendship is the balm and cordial of life, and without it 'tis a heavy load not worth sustaining. I am unhappy—thy mother and thyself at a distance from me ; and what can compensate for such a destitution ? For God's sake, persuade her to come and fix in England, for life is too short to waste in separation ; and, whilst she lives in one country and I in another, many people will suppose it proceeds from choice ; besides, I want thee near me, thou child and darling of my heart ! I am in a melancholy mood, and my Lydia's eyes will smart with weeping, when I tell her the cause that now affects me. I am apprehensive the dear friend <sup>1</sup> I mentioned in my last letter is going into a decline. I was with her two days ago, and I never beheld a being so altered ; she has a tender frame, and looks like a drooping lily, for the roses are fled from her cheeks. I can never see or talk to this incomparable woman without bursting into tears. I have a thousand obligations to her, and I owe her more than her whole sex, if not all the world put together. She has a delicacy in her way of thinking that few possess. Our conversations are of the most interesting nature ; and

<sup>1</sup> Mrs. Draper.

she talks to me of quitting this world with more composure than others think of living in it. I have wrote an epitaph, of which I send thee a copy ;—'tis expressive of her modest worth ;—but may Heaven restore her ;—and may she live to write mine !

Columns and labour'd urns but vainly show  
An idle scene of decorative woe ;  
The sweet companion, and the friend sincere,  
Need no mechanic help to force the tear.  
In heartfelt numbers, never meant to shine,  
'Twill flow eternal o'er a hearse like thine ;  
'Twill flow whilst gentle goodness has one friend,  
Or kindred tempers have a tear to lend.

Say all that is kind of me to thy mother, and believe me, my Lydia, that I love thee most truly.

So adieu. I am what I ever was, and hope ever shall be,  
Thy affectionate Father,  
L. STERNE.

As to Mr. M——, by your description he is a fat fool. I beg you will not give up your time to such a being. Send me some *bâtons pous les dents* ; there are none good here.

LAURENCE STERNE TO HIS DAUGHTER LYDIA

[*'Alas, poor Yorick'*]

Old Bond Street, *February 20, 1768.*

MY DEAREST LYDIA,—

My *Sentimental Journey*, you say, is admired in York by every one—and 'tis not vanity in me to tell you that it is no less admired here—but what is the gratification of my feelings on this occasion ?—The want of health bows me down, and vanity harbours not in thy father's breast—this vile influenza—be not alarm'd, I think I shall get the better of it—and shall be with you both the first of May ; and if I escape, 'twill not be for a long period, my child—unless a quiet retreat and peace of mind can restore me.—The subject of thy letter has astonished me.—She could but know little of my feelings, to tell thee, that under the supposition I should survive thy

mother, I should bequeath thee as a legacy to——<sup>1</sup> No, my Lydia! 'tis a lady, whose virtues I wish thee to imitate, that I shall entrust my girl to—I mean that friend whom I have so often talked and wrote about——<sup>2</sup> from her you will learn to be an affectionate wife, a tender mother, and a sincere friend—and you cannot be intimate with her, without her pouring some part of the milk of human kindness into your breast, which will serve to check the heat of your own temper, which you partake in a small degree of.—Nor will that amiable woman put my Lydia under the painful necessity to fly to India for protection, whilst it is in her power to grant her a more powerful one in England.—But I think, my Lydia, that thy mother will survive me—do not deject her spirits with thy apprehensions on my account.—I have sent you a neck-lace, buckles, and the same to your mother.—My girl cannot form a wish that is in the power of her father, that he will not gratify her in—and I cannot in justice be less kind to thy mother.—I am never alone——The kindness of my friends is ever the same—I wish though I had thee to nurse me—but I am denied that.—Write to me twice a week, at least.—God bless thee, my child, and believe me ever, ever thy affectionate father.

LAURENCE STERNE TO MRS. JAMES

[*His dying request*]

March, 15, 1768.

Your poor friend is scarce able to write, he has been at death's door this week with a pleurisy—I was bled three times on Thursday, and blister'd on Friday—The physician says I am better—God knows, for I feel myself sadly wrong, and shall, if I recover, be a long while of gaining strength.—Before I have gone thro' half this letter, I must stop to rest my weak hand above a dozen times—Mr. James was so good to call upon me yesterday. I felt emotions not to be described at the sight of him, and he overjoy'd me by talking a great deal of you.—Do, dear Mrs.. James, entreat him to come tomorrow, or next day, for perhaps I have not many days, or hours, to live.—I want to ask a favour of him, if I find myself

<sup>1</sup> Mrs. Draper.

<sup>2</sup> Mrs. James.

worse—that I shall beg of you, if in this wrestling I come off conqueror—my spirits are fled—'tis a bad omen—do not weep, my dear Lady—your tears are too precious to shed for me—bottle them up, and may the cork never be drawn.—Dearest, kindest, gentlest and best of women, may health, peace and happiness prove your handmaids.—If I die, cherish the remembrance of me, and forget the follies which you so often condemn'd—which my heart, not my head, betray'd me into. Should my child, my Lydia, want a mother, may I hope you will (if she is left parentless) take her to your bosom? You are the only woman on earth I can depend upon for such a benevolent action.—I wrote to her a fortnight ago, and told her what, I trust, she will find in you—Mr. James will be a father to her—he will protect her from every insult, for he wears a sword which he has served his country with, and which he would know how to draw out of the scabbard in defence of innocence.<sup>1</sup>—Commend me to him—as I now commend you to that Being who takes under His care the good and kind part of the world.—Adieu. All grateful thanks to you and Mr. James.

Your poor affectionate Friend,  
L. STERNE.

## DAVID HUME

1711-1776

JAMES MACPHERSON had just published his earliest fragments of Gaelic verse with his 'translations', when David Hume wrote the following letters on the subject. Suspicions as to their authenticity, as Hume's letter indicates, were entertained from the first, but when, as the result of Macpherson's quest in search of 'more of these wild flowers', he published the so-called epic poems of Ossian, he was openly accused of forgery, and he never seriously rebutted the charge. Johnson was one of the first to denounce the poems, and an interesting letter on the subject will be found among his correspondence with Boswell. 'Macpherson, in his way', said Scott, 'was certainly a man of high talents, and his poetic powers as honourable to his country as the use which he made of them, and I fear his personal character, in other respects, was a discredit to it'. Hume's second letter was written six years later, not long after his return from Paris, where he had at last found fame both as a philosopher and historian. He accompanied Lord Hertford to Paris in 1763, becoming secretary to

<sup>1</sup> Sterne's daughter remained, however, with her mother, and in due course returned with her to their favourite country, France. She appears to have married a Frenchman, and tradition has it that she became one of the victims of the Revolution.



the embassy, and, for some months acting *chargé d'affaires*. His stay in Paris led to an unfortunate intimacy with Rousseau, whom he brought home, where, among other substantial kindnesses, he procured for him a pension. Their memorable quarrel was forced upon Hume by Rousseau's suspicions and ingratitude.

DAVID HUME TO —

[*The authenticity of the 'Poems of Ossian'*]

Edinburgh, August 16, 1760.

SIR,—

I am surprised to find by your letter, that Mr. Gray should have entertained suspicions with regard to the authenticity of these fragments of our Highland poetry. The first time I was shown the copies of some of them in manuscript, by our friend John Home,<sup>1</sup> I was inclined to be a little incredulous on that head; but Mr. Home removed my scruples, by informing me of the manner in which he procured them from Mr. Macpherson, the translator. These two gentlemen were drinking the waters together at Moffat last autumn, when their conversation fell upon Highland poetry, which Mr. Macpherson extolled very highly. Our friend, who knew him to be a good scholar, and a man of taste, found his curiosity excited, and asked whether he had ever translated any of them. Mr. Macpherson replied, that he never had attempted any such thing, and doubted whether it was possible to transmute such beauties into our language; but, for Mr. Home's satisfaction, and in order to give him a general notion of the strain of that wild poetry, he would endeavour to turn one of them into English. He accordingly brought him one next day, which our friend was so much pleased with, that he never ceased soliciting Mr. Macpherson, till he insensibly produced that small volume which has been published.

After this volume was in everybody's hands, and universally admired, we heard every day new reasons, which put the authenticity, not the great antiquity which the translator ascribes to them, beyond all question, for their antiquity is a point which must be ascertained by reasoning; though the arguments he employs seem very probable and convincing. But certain it is, that these poems are in everybody's mouth

<sup>1</sup> Author of *Douglas*—produced by Rich at Covent Garden in 1757—and other plays, as well as a *History of the Rebellion of 1745*, in which affair he took an active part.

in the Highlands, have been handed down from father to son, and are of an age beyond all memory and tradition.

In the family of every Highland chieftain, there was anciently retained a bard, whose office was the same with that of the Greek rhapsodists ; and the general subject of the poems which they recited was the wars of Fingal ; an epoch no less remarkable among them, than the wars of Troy among the Greek poets. This custom is not even yet altogether abolished : the bard and piper are esteemed the most honourable offices in a chieftain's family, and these two characters are frequently united in the same person. Adam Smith, the celebrated Professor in Glasgow, told me that the piper of the Argyleshire Militia repeated to him all those poems which Mr. Macpherson has translated, and many more of equal beauty. Major Mackay, Lord Reay's brother, also told me that he remembers them perfectly ; as likewise did the Laird of Macfarlane, the greatest antiquarian whom we have in this country, and who insists so strongly on the historical truth, as well as on the poetical beauty of these productions. I could add the Laird and Lady Macleod to these authorities, with many more, if these were not sufficient, as they live in different parts of the Highlands, very remote from each other, and they could only be acquainted with poems that had become in a manner national works, and had gradually spread themselves into every mouth, and imprinted themselves on every memory. Every body in Edinburgh is so convinced of this truth, that we have endeavoured to put Mr. Macpherson on a way of procuring us more of these wild flowers. He is a modest, sensible young man, not settled in any living, but employed as a private tutor in Mr. Grahame of Belgowan's family, a way of life which he is not fond of. We have, therefore, set about a subscription of a guinea or two guineas a-piece, in order to enable him to quit that family, and undertake a mission into the Highlands, where he hopes to recover more of these fragments.

There is, in particular, a country surgeon somewhere in Lochabar, who, he says, can recite a great number of them, but never committed them to writing ; as indeed the orthography of the Highland language is not fixed, and the natives have always employed more the sword than the pen. This surgeon has by heart the Epic poem mentioned by Mr. Mac-

pherson in his Preface ; and as he is somewhat old, and is the only person living that has it entire, we are in the more haste to recover a monument, which will certainly be regarded as a curiosity in the republic of letters.

I own that my first and chief objection to the authenticity of these fragments was not on account of the noble and even tender strokes which they contain ; for these are the offspring of genius and passion in all countries ; I was only surprised at the regular plan which appears in some of these pieces, and which seems to be the work of a more cultivated age. None of the specimens of barbarous poetry known to us, the Hebrew, Arabian, or any other, contain this species of beauty ; and if a regular epic poem, or even any thing of that kind, nearly regular, should also come from that rough climate or uncivilized people, it would appear to me a phenomenon altogether unaccountable.

I remember Mr. Macpherson told me, that the heroes of this Highland epic were not only, like Homer's heroes, their own butchers, bakers, and cooks, but also their own shoe-makers, carpenters, and smiths. He mentioned an incident which put this matter in a remarkable light. A warrior had the head of his spear struck off in battle ; upon which he immediately retires behind the army, where a large forge was erected, makes a new one, hurries back to the action, pierces his enemy while the iron, which was yet red-hot, hisses in the wound. This imagery you will allow to be singular, and so well imagined that it would have been adopted by Homer had the manners of the Greeks allowed him to have employed it.

I forgot to mention, as another proof of the authenticity of these poems, and even of the reality of the adventures contained in them, that the names of the heroes, Fingal, Oscar, Osur, Oscan, Dermid, are still given in the Highlands to large mastiffs, in the same manner as we affix to them the names of Cæsar, Pompey, Hector, or the French that of Marlborough. It gives me pleasure to find that a person of so fine a taste as Mr. Gray approves of these fragments ; as it may convince us that our fondness of them is not altogether founded on national prepossessions, which, however, you know to be a little strong. The translation is elegant, but I made an objection to the author, which I wish you would communicate

to Mr. Gray, that we may judge of the justness of it. There appeared to me many verses in his prose, and all of them in the same measure with Mr. Shenstone's famous ballad,—

Ye shepherds, so cheerful and gay,  
Whose flocks never carelessly roam, etc.

Pray, ask Mr. Gray whether he made the same remark, etc., and whether he thinks it a blemish.

Yours most sincerely, etc.

DAVID HUME TO JEAN JACQUES ROUSSEAU

[*Rousseau's Ingratitude*]

June 26, 1766.

As I am conscious of having ever acted towards you the most friendly part, of having always given you the most tender and the most active proofs of sincere affection, you may judge of my extreme surprise on perusing your epistle. Such violent accusations, confined altogether to generalities, it is as impossible to answer as it is impossible to comprehend them. But affairs cannot, must not, remain on that footing. I shall charitably suppose that some infamous calumniator has belied me to you. But, in that case, it is your duty, and, I am persuaded, it will be your inclination, to give me an opportunity of detecting him, and of justifying myself, which can only be done by your mentioning the particulars of which I am accused. You say that I myself know that I have been false to you; but I say it loudly, and will say it to the whole world, that I know the contrary; that I know my friendship towards you has been unbounded and uninterrupted; and that though I have given you instances of it, which have been universally remarked both in France and England, the public as yet are acquainted only with the smallest part of it. I demand that you name to me the man who dares assert the contrary; and, above all, I demand that he shall mention any one particular in which I have been wanting to you. You owe this to me, you owe it to yourself, you owe it to truth, and honour, and justice, and to everything deemed sacred among men. As an innocent man—for I will not say as your friend, I will not say as your benefactor—but I repeat

it, as an innocent man I claim the privilege of proving my innocence and of refuting any scandalous falsehood which may have been invented against me. Mr. Davenport, to whom I have sent a copy of your letter, and who will read this before he delivers it, will, I am confident, second my demand and tell you that nothing can be more equitable. Happily I have preserved the letter you wrote me after your arrival at Wotton; and you there express, in the strongest terms, in terms indeed too strong, your satisfaction in my poor endeavours to serve you. The little epistolary intercourse which afterwards passed between us has been all employed on my side to the most friendly purposes. Tell me, then, what has since given you offence? Tell me of what I am accused. Tell me the man who accuses me. Even after you have fulfilled all these conditions to my satisfaction, and to that of Mr. Davenport, you will still have great difficulty to justify your employing such outrageous terms towards a man with whom you have been so intimately connected, and who was entitled, on many accounts, to have been treated by you with more regard and decency. Mr. Davenport knows the whole transaction about your pension, because I thought it necessary that the person who had undertaken your settlement should be fully acquainted with your circumstances, lest he should be tempted to perform towards you concealed acts of generosity, which, if they accidentally came to your knowledge, might give you some grounds of offence.

I am, sir, etc.

#### THOMAS GRAY

1716-1771

GRAY and Walpole, two of the best letter-writers in the language, began their friendship at Eton, and quarrelled while travelling on the continent together after leaving Cambridge. We have left the letters of Walpole to deal with that memorable and unfortunate affair, the first of the two following letters from Gray having been written two years before their continental tour, and the other some years after the quarrel had been patched up. The 1737 letter is interesting not only for its first touch of the remarkable love of nature which characterised every period of Gray's life, but for its early connexion with the Stoke and Burnham country—now inseparably associated with his name—where his uncle was then living. The second letter relates how Gray's immortal *Elegy* came to be published. Gray, in the first place, had sent the poem to Walpole, and it had become



so well-known from being handed about in manuscript form that the poet was forced to print it. Six years later, as mentioned in his first letters to his friend and biographer, the Rev. W. Mason—himself a poet—Gray declined the laureateship, which had been offered to him on the death of Colley Cibber. The later letters of Gray show him in varying moods, but they are all marked with the rare literary charm which distinguishes almost the whole of his correspondence.

THOMAS GRAY TO HORACE WALPOLE

[*The Stoke and Burnham Country*]

Burnham, *September, 1737.*

I WAS hindered in my last, and so could not give you all the trouble I would have done. The description of a road, which your coach wheels have so often honoured, it would be needless to give you ; suffice it that I arrived safe at my uncle's, who is a great hunter in imagination ; his dogs take up every chair in the house, so I am forced to stand at this present writing ; and though the gout forbids him galloping after them in the field, yet he continues still to regale his ears and nose with their comfortable noise and stink. He holds me mighty cheap, I perceive, for walking when I should ride, and reading when I should hunt. My comfort amidst all this is, that I have at the distance of half a mile, through a green lane, a forest (the vulgar call it a common) all my own, at least as good as so, for I spy no human thing in it but myself. It is a little chaos of mountains and precipices ; mountains, it is true, that do not ascend much above the clouds, nor are the declivities quite so amazing as Dover cliff : but just such hills as people who love their necks as well as I do may venture to climb, and crags that give the eye as much pleasure as if they were more dangerous : both vale and hill are covered with most venerable beeches, and other very reverend vegetables, that, like most other ancient people, are always dreaming out their old stories to the winds,

And as they bow their hoary tops relate,  
In murmuring sounds, the dark decrees of fate ;  
While visions, as poetic eyes avow,  
Cling to each leaf and swarm on every bough.

At the foot of one of these squats ME I (*il penseroso*), and there grow to the trunk for a whole morning. The timorous

hare and sportive squirrel gambol around me like Adam in Paradise (before he had an Eve); but I think he did not use to read Virgil, as I commonly do there. In this situation I often converse with my Horace, aloud too; that is talk to you, but I do not remember that I ever heard you answer me. I beg pardon for taking all the conversation to myself, but it is entirely your own fault. We have old Mr. Southern<sup>1</sup> at a gentleman's house a little way off, who often comes to see us; he is now seventy-seven years old, and has almost wholly lost his memory; but is as agreeable as an old man can be, at least I persuade myself so when I look at him, and think of Isabella and Oroonoko. I shall be in town in about three weeks. Adieu.

THOMAS GRAY TO HORACE WALPOLE

[How the 'Elegy' came to be published]

Cambridge, February 11, 1751.

As you have brought me into a little sort of distress, you must assist me, I believe, to get out of it as well as I can. Yesterday I had the misfortune of receiving a letter from certain gentlemen (as their bookseller expresses it), who have taken the Magazine of Magazines into their hands. They tell me that an *ingenious* poem, called 'Reflections in a Country Churchyard', has been communicated to them, which they are printing forthwith: that they are informed that the *excellent* author of it is I by name, and that they beg not only his *indulgence*, but the *honour* of his correspondence, etc. As I am not at all disposed to be either so indulgent, or so correspondent, as they desire, I have but one bad way left to escape the honour they would inflict upon me; and, therefore, am obliged to desire you would make Dodsley print it immediately (which may be done in less than a week's time) from your copy; but without my name, in what form is most convenient for him; but on his best paper and character; he must correct the press himself, and print it without any interval between the stanzas, because the sense is in some places continued beyond them; and the title must be—'Elegy, written in a Country Churchyard'. If he would add

<sup>1</sup> Thomas Southerne, the dramatist. He was eighty-six when he died.

a line or two to say it came into his hands by accident, I should like it better. If you behold the Magazine of Magazines in the light that I do, you will not refuse to give yourself this trouble on my account, which you have taken of your own accord before now. If Dodsley do not do this immediately, he may as well let it alone.

THOMAS GRAY TO THE REV. WILLIAM MASON

[*In melancholy mood ; his refusal of the Laureateship*]

Cambridge, December 19, 1757.

A life spent out of the world has its hours of despondence, its inconveniences, its sufferings, as numerous and as real, though not quite of the same sort, as a life spent in the midst of it. The power we have, when we will exert it over our own minds, joined to a little strength and consolation, nay, a little pride we catch from those that seem to love us, is our only support in either of these conditions. I am sensible I cannot return you more of this assistance than I have received from you ; and can only tell you, that one who has far more reason than you, I hope, ever will have to look on life with something worse than indifference, is yet no enemy to it ; but can look backward on many bitter moments partly with satisfaction, and partly with patience ; and forward too, on a scene not very promising, with some hope, and some expectations of a better day. The cause, however, which occasioned your reflection (though I can judge but very imperfectly of it) does not seem, at present, to be weighty enough to make you take any such resolution as you meditate. Use it in season, as a relief from what is tiresome to you, but not as if it was in consequence of anything you take ill ; on the contrary, if such a thing had happened at the time of your transmigration, I would defer it merely to avoid that appearance.

As to myself, I cannot boast, at present, either of my spirits, my situation, my employment, or fertility. The days and the nights pass, and I am never the nearer to anything, but that one to which we are all tending ; yet I love people that leave some traces of their journey behind them, and have strength enough to advise you to do so while you can. I expect to see *Caractacus* completed, and therefore I send you

the books you wanted. I do not know whether they will furnish you with any new matter ; but they are well enough written, and easily read. I told you before that (in a time of dearth) I would borrow from the Edda, without entering too minutely on particulars : but, if I did so, I would make each image so clear, that it might be fully understood by itself ; for in this obscure mythology we must not hint at things, as we do with the Greek fables, that everybody is supposed to know at school. However, on second thoughts, I think it would be still better to graft any wild picturesque fable, absolutely of one's own invention, on the Druid stock ; I mean on those half dozen of old fancies that are known to be a part of their system. This will give you more freedom and latitude, and will leave no hold for the critics to fasten on.

I send you back the *Elegy*<sup>1</sup> as you desired me to do. My advices are always at your service to take or to refuse, therefore you should not call them severe. You know I do not love, much less pique myself on criticism ; and think even a bad verse as good a thing or better than the best observation that ever was made upon it. I like greatly the spirit and sentiment of it (much of which you perhaps owe to your present train of thinking) ; the disposition of the whole too is natural and elegiac ; as to the expression, I would venture to say (did not you forbid me) that it is sometimes too easy. The last line I protest against (this, you will say, is worse than blotting out rhymes) ; the descriptive part is excellent.

Pray, when did I pretend to finish, or even insert passages into other people's works, as if it were equally easy to pick holes and to mend them ? All I can say is, that your *Elegy* must not end with the worst line in it. It is flat ; it is prose ; whereas that, above all, ought to sparkle, or at least to shine. If the sentiment must stand, twirl it a little into an apophthegm. stick a flower in it ; gild it with a costly expression ; let it strike the fancy, the ear, or the heart, and I am satisfied.

The other particular expressions which I object to, I mark on the manuscript. Now, I desire you would neither think me severe, nor at all regard what I say further than as it coincides with your own judgment ; for the child deserves your partiality ; it is a healthy, well-made boy with an ingenuous countenance, and promises to live long. I would only wash

<sup>1</sup> *Elegy in the Garden of a Friend.*

its face, dress it a little, make it walk upright and strong, and keep it from learning *paw* words.

I hope you couched my refusal <sup>1</sup> to Lord John Cavendish in as respectful terms as possible, and with all due acknowledgment to the Duke. If you hear who it is to be given to, pray let me know; for I interest myself a little in the history of it, and rather wish somebody may accept it that will retrieve the credit of the thing, if it be retrievable, or ever had any credit. Rowe was, I think, the last man of character that had it; Eusden was a person of great hopes in his youth, though at last he turned out a drunken parson; Dryden was as disgraceful to the office, from his character, as the poorest scribbler could have been from his verses.

THOMAS GRAY TO THE REV. NORTON NICHOLLS <sup>2</sup>

[*Filial Reflections*]

Pembroke Hall, *August 26, 1766.*

DEAR SIR,—

It is long since that I heard you were gone in haste into Yorkshire on account of your mother's illness; and the same letter informed me that she was recovered; otherwise I had then wrote to you, only to beg you would take care of her, and to inform you that I had discovered a thing very little known, which is, that in one's whole life one never can have any more than a single mother. You may think this is obvious, and (what you call) a trite observation. You are a green gosling! I was at the same age (very near) as wise as you, and yet I never discovered this (with full evidence and conviction, I mean) till it was too late. It is thirteen years ago, and seems but yesterday; and every day I live it sinks deeper into my heart.

Many a corollary could I draw from this axiom for your use (not for my own), but I will leave you the merit of doing it yourself. Pray tell me how your own health is. I conclude it perfect, as I hear you offered yourself for a guide to Mr. Palgrave, into the Sierra-Morena of Yorkshire. For me, I passed the end of May and all June in Kent not disagreeably;

<sup>1</sup> Of the offer of the Poet Laureateship on the death of Cibber.

<sup>2</sup> The Rev. Norton Nicholls was one of the poet's most intimate friends, and his *Recollections of Gray* are invaluable.



the country is all a garden, gay, rich, and fruitful, and (from the rainy season) had preserved, till I left it, all that emerald verdure, which commonly only one sees for the first fortnight of the spring. In the west part of it from every eminence the eye catches some long winding reach of the Thames or Medway, with all their navigation; in the east, the sea breaks in upon you, and mixes its white transient sails and glittering blue expanse with the deeper and brighter greens of the woods and corn. This last sentence is so fine, I am quite ashamed; but, no matter; you must translate it into prose. Palgrave, if he heard it, would cover his face with his pudding sleeve.

I went to Margate for a day; one would think it was Bartholomew fair that had *flown* down from Smithfield to Kent in the London machine, like my Lady Stuffedamask (to be sure you have read the New Bath Guide,<sup>1</sup> the most fashionable of books): so then I did *not* go to Kingsgate, because it belonged to my Lord Holland; but to Ramsgate I did, and so to Sandwich, and Deal, and Dover, and Folkestone, and Hythe, all along the coast, very delightful. I do not tell you of the great and small beasts, and creeping things innumerable that I met with, because you do not suspect that this world is inhabited by anything but men and women and clergy, and such two-legged cattle. . . . Do you remember how we are to go into Wales next year? Well! Adieu, I am sincerely yours.

T. G.

# THOMAS GRAY TO THE REV. WILLIAM MASON <sup>2</sup>

[*'The Voice of Friendship in its tenderest Note'*]

MY DEAR MASON,—

I break in upon you at a moment when we least of all are permitted to disturb our friends, only to say that you are daily and hourly present to my thoughts. If the worst be not yet passed, you will neglect and pardon me; but if the last struggle

<sup>1</sup> The celebrated series of Poetical Epistles by Christopher Anstey (1724–1805), published under the title, the *New Bath Guide*, in 1766, when it had a tremendous vogue—'a set of letters', writes Walpole, 'describing the life at Bath, and incidentally everything else; but so much wit, so much humour, fun and poetry, so much originality, never met together before'.

<sup>2</sup> 'This little billet', writes the Rev. William Mason, whose wife lay dying when it was dispatched, 'which I received almost at the precise moment when it would be most affecting, then breathed, and still seems to breathe, the voice of friendship in its tenderest and most pathetic note'.

be over, if the poor object of your long anxieties be no longer sensible to your kindness or to her own sufferings, allow me (at least in idea, for what could I do were I present more than this), to sit by you in silence, and pity from my heart, not her who is at rest, but you who lose her. May He who made us, the Master of our pleasures and of our pains, preserve and support you. Adieu !

## HORACE WALPOLE

1717-1797

THERE is such a rich mine of material in Walpole's letters that it is difficult to make a satisfactory selection within the limits of the present volume. 'For diversity of interest and perpetual entertainment, for the constant surprises of an unique species of wit, for happy and unexpected terms of phrase, for graphic characterization and clever anecdote, for playfulness, pungency, irony, persiflage', writes Mr. Austin Dobson at the close of his memoir of Walpole, 'there is nothing in English like his correspondence'. The following selection has largely been made with the object of providing connecting links with the poets who precede and follow him—Gray and Chatterton—the remaining letters being added for their autobiographical interest. The first—to the Rev. William Cole—relates chiefly to the Gothic romance of *The Castle of Otranto*, published in 1764 as a translation from a black-letter original printed at Naples in 1529. The romance was a success, and no one appears to have doubted its authenticity ; but, in the second edition which appeared in the following spring, Walpole disclosed his authorship. It is strange that it should have fallen to the lot of the author of the fabricated *Castle of Otranto* to decide the fate of the author of the fabricated Rowley poems. Chatterton posted his specimens of alleged antique verse to Walpole from Bristol in 1769, but it was not until some correspondence had passed between them, concluding with an impatient and, as Walpole afterwards described it, 'singularly impertinent' letter from the precocious young poet, that Walpole returned the poems to Bristol without another word, and washed his hands of the whole affair. He has been bitterly attacked for his conduct by the apologists of Chatterton ; but, as Mr. Austin Dobson says, Walpole acted very much as he might have been expected to act ; and when he heard that Chatterton had come to London and destroyed himself, he seems to have been genuinely grieved. The letters relating to Gray may be left to speak for themselves ; but a word is due to Walpole for his generous behaviour in taking upon himself the entire blame for his quarrel with the poet.

HORACE WALPOLE TO THE REV. WILLIAM COLE

[*'The Castle of Otranto'* ; the Percy '*Reliques*']

Strawberry Hill, March 9, 1765.

DEAR SIR,—

I had time to write but a short note with the *Castle of*

*Otranto*, as your messenger called on me at four o'clock, as I was going to dine abroad. Your partiality to me and Strawberry have, I hope, inclined you to excuse the wildness of the story. You will even have found some traits to put you in mind of this place. When you read of the picture quitting its panel, did not you recollect the portrait of Lord Falkland, all in white, in my gallery? Shall I even confess to you, what was the origin of this romance? I waked one morning, in the beginning of last June, from a dream, of which all I could recover was, that I had thought myself in an ancient castle (a very natural dream for a head filled like mine with Gothie story), and that on the uppermost banister of a great staircase I saw a giantie hand in armour. In the evening I sat down, and began to write, without knowing in the least what I intended to say or relate. The work grew on my hands, and I grew fond of it—and, that I was very glad to think of anything rather than politics. In short, I was so engrossed with my tale, which I completed in less than two months, that one evening I wrote from the time I had drunk my tea, about six o'clock, till half an hour after one in the morning, when my hand and fingers were so weary that I could not hold the pen to finish the sentence, but left Matilda and Isabella talking, in the middle of a paragraph. You will laugh at my earnestness; but if I have amused you, by retracing with any fidelity the manners of ancient days, I am content, and give you leave to think me idle as you please. . . .

Lord Essex's trial is printed with the State Trials. In return for your obliging offer, I can acquaint you with a delightful publication of this winter, *A Collection of Old Ballads and Poetry*, in three volumes, many from Pepys's Collection in Cambridge. There were three such published between thirty and forty years ago, but very carelessly, and wanting many in this set: indeed, there were others, of a looser sort, which the present editor [Dr. Percy<sup>1</sup>], who is a clergyman, thought it decent to omit. . . .

My bower is determined, but not at all what it is to be. Though I write romances, I cannot tell how to build all that belongs to them. Madame Danois, in the Fairy Tales, used to *tapestry* them with *jonquils*; but as that furniture will

<sup>1</sup> Editor of *The Reliques of Ancient English Poetry*, and Bishop of Dromore.

not last above a fortnight in the year, I shall prefer something more huckaback. I have decided that the outside shall be of *treillage*, which, however, I shall not commence till I have again seen some of old Louis's old-fashioned *Galanteries* at Versailles. Rosamond's bower, you, and I, and Tom Hearne know, was a labyrinth: but as my territory will admit of a very short clew, I lay aside all thoughts of a mazy habitation: though a bower is very different from an arbour, and must have more chambers than one. In short, I both know and don't know what it should be. I am almost afraid I must go and read Spenser, and wade through his allegories and drawling stanzas to get at a picture. But, good-night! you see how one gossips when one is alone and at quiet on one's own dunghill! Well! it may be trifling; yet it is such trifling as Ambition never is happy enough to know! Ambition orders palaces, but it is Content that chats for a page or two over a bower.

HORACE WALPOLE TO THOMAS GRAY

[*His interest in Gray's Poetry; his own literary work; and Boswell's 'Corsica'*]

Arlington Street, February 18, 1768.

You have sent me a long and very obliging letter, and yet I am extremely out of humour with you. I saw *Poems*,<sup>1</sup> by Mr. Gray, advertised: I called directly at Dodsley's to know if this was to be more than a new edition? He was not at home himself, but his foreman told me he thought there were some new pieces and notes to the whole. It was very unkind, not only to go out of town without mentioning them to me, without showing them to me, but not to say a word of them in this letter. Do you think I am indifferent or not curious about what you write? I have ceased to ask you, because you have so long refused to show me anything. You could not suppose I thought that you never write. No; but I concluded you did not intend, at least yet, to publish what you had written. As you did intend it, I might have expected a month's preference. You will do me the justice to own that I had always rather have seen your writings than have

<sup>1</sup> Gray collected his poems in the first general edition in 1768.

shown you mine, which you know are the most hasty trifles in the world, and which, though I may be fond of the subject when fresh, I constantly forget in a very short time after they are published. This would sound like affectation to others, but will not to you. It would be affected, even to you, to say I am indifferent to fame. I certainly am not ; but I am indifferent to almost anything I have done to acquire it. The greater part are mere compilations ; and no wonder they are, as you say, incorrect, when they are commonly written with people in the room, as *Richard*<sup>1</sup> and the *Noble Authors* were. But I doubt there is a more intrinsic fault in them : which is, that I cannot correct them. If I write tolerably, it must be at once ; I can neither mend nor add. The articles of Lord Capel and Lord Peterborough, in the second edition of the *Noble Authors*, cost me more trouble than all the rest together : and you may perceive that the worst part of *Richard*, in point of ease and style, is what relates to the papers you gave me on Jane Shore, because it was tacked on so long afterwards, and when my impetus was chilled. If some time or other you will take the trouble of pointing out the inaccuracies of it, I shall be much obliged to you : at present I shall meddle no more with it. It has taken its fate : nor did I mean to complain. I found it was condemned indeed beforehand, which was what I alluded to. Since publication (as has happened to me before) the success has gone beyond my expectation.

Not only at Cambridge, but here, there have been people wise enough to think me too free with the King of Prussia ! A newspaper has talked of my known inveteracy to him. Truly, I love him as well as I do most kings. The greater offence is my reflection on Lord Clarendon. It is forgotten that I had overpraised him before. Pray turn to the new State Papers ; from which, it is said, he composed his history. You will find they are the papers from which he did not compose his history. And yet I admire my Lord Clarendon more than these pretended admirers do. But I do not intend to justify myself. I can as little satisfy those who complain that I do not let them know what *really did* happen. If this inquiry can ferret out any truth I shall be glad. I have picked up a few more circumstances. I now want to know what Perkin

<sup>1</sup> *Historic doubts on Richard III*, published February, 1768.



Warbeck's Proclamation was which Speed in his history says is preserved by Bishop Leslie. If you look in Speed perhaps you will be able to assist me.

The Duke of Richmond and Lord Lyttelton agree with you, that I have not disculpated Richard of the murder of Henry VI. I own to you, it is the crime of which, in my own mind, I believe him most guiltless. Had I thought he committed it, I should never have taken the trouble to apologize for the rest. I am not at all positive or obstinate on your other objections, nor know exactly what I believe on many points of this story. And I am so sincere that, except a few notes hereafter, I shall leave the matter to be settled or discussed by others. As you have written much too little, I have written a great deal too much, and think only of finishing the two or three other things I have begun—and of those, nothing but the last volume of *Painters* is designed for the present public. What has one to do when turned fifty but really think of *finishing*? . . .

Pray read the new *Account of Corsica*<sup>1</sup>; what relates to Paoli will amuse you much. There is a deal about the island and its divisions that one does not care a straw for.

The author, Boswell, is a strange being, and, like Cambridge, has a rage of knowing anybody that was ever talked of. He forced himself upon me at Paris, in spite of my teeth and my doors, and I see has given a foolish account of all he could pick up from me about King Theodore.<sup>2</sup> He then took an antipathy to me on Rousseau's account, abused me in the newspapers, and exhorted Rousseau to do so too: but as he came to see me no more, I forgave all the rest. I see he now is a little sick of Rousseau himself; but I hope it will not cure him of his anger to me. However, his book will, I am sure, entertain you.

I will add but a word or two more. I am criticised for the expression *tinker up* in the preface. Is this one of those that you object to? I own I think such a low expression, placed to ridicule an absurd instance of wise folly, very forcible. Replace it with an elevated word or phrase, and to my conception it becomes as flat as possible. . . .

Adieu!

<sup>1</sup> Boswell's *Account of Corsica*, which went through two editions in its first year.

<sup>2</sup> Otherwise Baron Theodore de Neuhoff, who was crowned King of Corsica in 1738. He died in London, 1756.

HORACE WALPOLE TO THE REV. WM. MASON<sup>1</sup>[*The Story of his Quarrel with Gray*]

March 2, 1773.

How shall I thank you for the kind manner in which you submit your papers for my correction ? but if you are friendly I must be just ; I am so far from being dissatisfied that I must beg leave to sharpen your pen, and in that light only, with regard to myself, would make any alterations in your text. I am conscious that in the beginning of the differences between me and Gray, the fault was mine. I was too young, too fond of my own diversions, nay, I do not doubt, too much intoxicated by indulgence, vanity, and the insolence of my situation, as a Prime Minister's son, not to have been inattentive and insensible to the feelings of one I thought below me ; of one, I blush to say it, that I knew was obliged to me ; of one whom presumption and folly perhaps made me deem not my superior *then* in parts, though I have since felt my infinite inferiority to him. I treated him insolently ; he loved me and I did not think he did. I reproached him with the difference between us, when he acted from conviction of knowing he was my superior ; I often disregarded his wishes of seeing places, which I would not quit other amusements to visit, though I offered to send him to them without me. Forgive me, if I say that his temper was not conciliating. At the same time that I will confess to you that he acted a more friendly part, had I had the sense to take advantage of it ; he freely told me of my faults. I declared I did not desire to hear them, nor would correct them. You will not wonder that with the dignity of his spirit, and the obstinate carelessness of mine, the breach must have grown wider, till we became incompatible. After this confession, I fear you will think I fall far short of the justice I promised him, in the words which I should wish to have substituted to some of yours. If you think them inadequate to the state of the case, as I own they are, preserve this letter, and let some future Sir John Dalrymple produce it to load my memory—but I own I do not desire that any ambiguity should aid his invention to forge an account for me. If you have no objection, I would

<sup>1</sup> Gray's friend and biographer.

propose your narrative should run thus, and contain no more, till a more proper time shall come for stating the truth, as I have related it to you. While I am living, it is not pleasant to read one's private quarrels discussed in magazines and newspapers.

#### IN SECTION SECOND <sup>1</sup>

'But I must here add, in order to forewarn my readers of a disappointment, that this correspondence (viz., during his travels) is defective towards the end, and includes no description either of Venice or its territories, the last places which Mr. Gray visited. This defect was occasioned by an unfortunate disagreement between him and Mr. W., which arising from the great difference of temper between the pensive, curious philosophy of the former, and the gay and youthful inconsideration of the latter, occasioned their separation at Reggio'.

Note to be added. 'In justice to the memory of so respectable a friend, Mr. W. enjoins me to charge him with the chief blame in their quarrel, confessing that more attention, complaisance and deference on his part to a warm friendship, and to a very superior understanding and judgment, might have prevented a rupture that gave much uneasiness to both, and a lasting concern to the survivor, though in the year 1744 a reconciliation was effected by a lady, who wished well to them both'.

This note I think will specify all that is necessary, and though humiliating to me, is due to my friend, and a vindication I owe him. . . .

HORACE WALPOLE TO——

[*Scorns his Contemporaries*]

Arlington Street, April 27, 1773.

MR. GOUGH <sup>2</sup> wants to be introduced to me! Indeed! I would see him, as he has been mid-wife to Masters <sup>3</sup>; but he

<sup>1</sup> Mason had explained in his letter to Walpole that he had planned his life of Gray in sections, each of which introduced a distinct set of letters, poems, etc.

<sup>2</sup> Richard Gough, antiquary (1735-1809).

<sup>3</sup> Robert Masters, historian and antiquarian (1713-98). In 1771, he published *Some Remarks on Mr. Walpole's Historic Doubts on the Life and Reign of Richard III.*

is so dull that he would only be troublesome—and besides, you know I shun authors, and would never have been one myself, if it obliged me to keep such bad company. They are always in earnest, and think their profession serious, and will dwell upon trifles, and reverence learning. I laugh at all these things, and write only to laugh at them and divert myself. None of us are authors of any consequence, and it is the most ridiculous of all vanities to be vain of being *mediocre*. A page in a great author humbles me to the dust, and the conversation of those that are not superior to myself reminds me of what will be thought of myself. I blush to flatter them; or to be flattered by them; and should dread letters being published some time or other, in which they would relate our interviews, and we should appear like those puny conceited wittlings in Shenstone's and Hughes's correspondence, who give themselves airs from being in possession of the soil of Parnassus for the time being; as peers are proud because they enjoy the estates of great men who went before them. Mr. Gough is very welcome to see Strawberry-hill, or I would help him to any scraps in my possession that would assist his publications, though he is one of those industrious who are only re-burying the dead—but I cannot be acquainted with him; it is contrary to my system and my humour; and besides I know nothing of barrows and Danish entrenchments, and Saxon barbarisms and Phœnician characters—in short, I know nothing of those ages that knew nothing—then how should I be of use to modern literati? All the Scotch metaphysicians have sent me their works. I did not read one of them, because I do not understand what is not understood by those that write about it; and I did not get acquainted with one of the writers. I should like to be intimate with Mr. Anstey,<sup>1</sup> even though he wrote *Lord Buckhorse*, or with the author of the *Heroic Epistle*—I have no thirst to know the rest of my contemporaries, from the absurd bombast of Dr. Johnson down to the silly Dr. Goldsmith, though the latter changeling has had bright gleams of parts, and the former had sense, till he changed it for words, and sold it for a pension. Don't think me scornful. Recollect that I have seen Pope, and lived with Gray. Adieu!

<sup>1</sup> Christopher Anstey, author of the *New Bath Guide*. (See p. 249.) Among other works Anstey published *The Patriot*, a 'Pindaric Epistle' on prize fighting, addressed to Buckhorse, a notorious bruiser.

HORACE WALPOLE TO THE REV. WILLIAM COLE

[*The Death and Genius of Chatterton*]

Strawberry Hill, June 19, 1777.

I THANK you for your notices, Dear Sir, and shall remember that on Prince William. I did see the *Monthly Review*, but hope one is not guilty of the death of every man who does not make one the dupe of a forgery. I believe M'Pherson's success with *Ossian* was more the ruin of Chatterton than I. Two years passed between my doubting the authenticity of Rowley's poems and his death. I never knew he had been in London till some time after he had undone and poisoned himself there. The poems he sent me were transcripts in his own hand, and even in that circumstance he told a lie: he said he had them from the very person at Bristol to whom he had given them. If any man was to tell you that monkish rhymes had been dug up at Herculanæum, which was destroyed several centuries before there was any such poetry, should you believe it? Just the reverse is the case of Rowley's pretended poems. They have all the elegance of Waller and Prior and more than Lord Surrey—but I cannot think that Rowley foresaw metres that were invented long after he was dead, or that our language was more refined at Bristol in the reign of Henry V than it was at Court under Henry VIII. One of the chaplains of the Bishop of Exeter has found a line of Rowley in *Hudibras*—the monk might foresee that too. The prematurity of Chatterton's genius is, however, full as wonderful, as that such a prodigy as Rowley should never have been heard of till the eighteenth century. The youth and industry of the former are miracles, too, yet still more credible. There is not a symptom in the poems, but the old words, that savours of Rowley's age—change the old words for modern, and the whole construction is of yesterday.

HORACE WALPOLE TO MISS BERRY <sup>1</sup>[*Boswell's Johnson and Burke's Pamphlet on the Revolution*]

Berkeley Square, May 26, 1791.

I AM rich in letters from you; I received that by Lord

<sup>1</sup> Mary Berry was the elder of the two Miss Berrys, addressed in the next letter by Walpole as 'my beloved spouses'. Walpole was over 70 when he met the sisters for



Elgin's courier first, as you expected, and its elder the next day. You tell me mine entertain you : *tant mieux*. It is my wish, but my wonder ; for I live so little in the world, that I do not know the present generation by sight : for, though I pass by them in the streets, the hats with valences, the folds above the chin of the ladies, and the dirty shirts and shaggy hair of the young men, who have levelled nobility almost as much as the nobility in France have, have confounded all individuality. Besides, if I did go to public places and assemblies, which my going to roost earlier prevents, the bats and owls do not begin to fly abroad till far in the night, when they begin to see and be seen. However, one of the empresses of fashion, the Duchess of Gordon, uses fifteen to sixteen hours of her four-and-twenty. I heard her journal of last Monday. She went first to Handel's music in the Abbey ; she then clambered over the benches, and went to Hastings' trial in the Hall ; after dinner, to the play ; then to Lady Lucan's assembly ; after that to Ranelagh and returned to Mrs. Hobart's faro-table ; gave a ball herself in the evening of that morning, into which she must have got a good way ; and set out for Scotland the next day. Hercules could not have achieved a quarter of her labours in the same space of time. . . . Sir William Hamilton is arrived—his Nymph of the Attitudes<sup>1</sup> was too prudish to visit the rambling peeress.

The rest of my letter must be literary ; for we have no news. Boswell's book<sup>2</sup> is gossiping, but, having numbers of proper names, would be more readable, at least by me, were it reduced from two volumes to one : but there are woful *longueurs*, both about his hero and himself, the *fidus Achates* ; about whom one has not the smallest curiosity. But I wrong the original Achates ; one is satisfied with his fidelity in keeping his master's

the first time in 1788, and for the last ten years of his life he lavished upon them both the warmest affection that his heart had ever been able to bestow. In the year in which this letter was written, he persuaded them to take possession of Little Strawberry Hill, a house of Walpole's previously known as Cliveden—having been the residence of his friend Kitty Clive, the actress, who died in 1785—and on his death he left the property to them, together with a sum of £4,000 each. To the two sisters and their father, Robert Berry, Walpole also left his literary remains. In addition to editing Walpole's works Mary Berry herself wrote a number of books, including *A Comparative View of the Social life of England and France*, and several plays. Both the Miss Berrys were at different times engaged to be married, but in each case the engagement was broken off. They lived together for over 82 years, Mary surviving until she was 89.

<sup>1</sup> Emily Hart, who married Sir William Hamilton in the following September—Nelson's 'Emma'.

<sup>2</sup> His *Life of Johnson*, just published.

secrets and weaknesses, which modern led-captains betray for their patron's glory and to hurt their own enemies ; which Boswell has done shamefully, particularly against Mrs. Piozzi, and Mrs. Montagu, and Bishop Perey. Dr. Blagden says justly, that it is a new kind of libel, by which you may abuse anybody, by saying some dead person said so and so of somebody alive. Often, indeed, Johnson made the most brutal speeches to living persons ; for though he was good-natured at bottom, he was very ill-natured at top. He loved to dispute, to show his superiority. If his opponents were weak, he told them they were fools ; if they vanquished him, he was scurrilous—to nobody more than to Boswell himself, who was contemptible for flattering him so grossly, and for enduring the coarse things he was continually vomiting on Boswell's own country, Scotland. I expected, amongst the excommunicated, to find myself, but am very gently treated. I never would be in the least acquainted with Johnson ; or, as Boswell calls it, I had not a just value for him ; which the biographer imputes to my resentment for the doctor's putting bad arguments (purposely, out of Jacobitism) into the speeches which he wrote fifty years ago for my father, in the *Gentleman's Magazine* ; which I did not read then, or ever knew Johnson wrote till Johnson died, nor have looked at since. Johnson's blind Toryism and known brutality kept me aloof ; nor did I ever exchange a syllable with him : nay, I do not think I ever was in the room with him six times in my days. Boswell came to me, said Dr. Johnson was writing the *Lives of the Poets*, and wished I would give him anecdotes of Mr. Gray. I said, very coldly, I had given what I knew to Mr. Mason. Boswell hummed and hawed and then dropped, ' I suppose you know Dr. Johnson does not admire Mr. Gray '. Putting as much contempt as I could into my look and tone, I said, ' Dr. Johnson don't !—humph ! '—and with that monosyllable ended our interview. After the doctor's death, Burke, Sir Joshua Reynolds, and Boswell sent an ambling circular-letter to me, begging subscriptions for a monument for him—the two last, I think, impertinently ; as they could not but know my opinion, and could not suppose I would contribute to a monument for one who had endeavoured, poor soul ! to degrade my friend's superlative poetry, I would not deign to write an answer ; but sent down word by

my footman, as I would have done to parish officers with a brief, that I would not subscribe. In the two new volumes Johnson says, and very probably did, or is made to say, that Gray's poetry is *dull*, and that he was a *dull* man! The same oracle dislikes Prior, Swift, and Fielding. If an elephant could write a book, perhaps one that had read a great deal would say, that an Arabian horse is a very clumsy, ungraceful animal. Pass to a better chapter.

Burke has published another pamphlet against the French Revolution, in which he attacks it still more grievously. The beginning is very good; but it is not equal nor quite so injurious as parts of its predecessor; is far less brilliant, as well as much shorter: but, were it ever so long, his mind overflows with such a torrent of images, that he cannot be tedious. His invective against Rousseau is admirable, just, and new. Voltaire he passes almost contemptuously. I wish he had dissected Mirabeau too; and I grieve that he has omitted the violation of the consciences of the clergy, nor stigmatized those universal plunderers, the National Assembly, who gorge themselves with eighteen livres a-day; which to many of them would, three years ago, have been astonishing opulence. . . . There are many letters of news, that are very entertaining too—but it is nine o'clock, and I must go to Lady Cecilia's.

HORACE WALPOLE TO AGNES AND MARY BERRY<sup>1</sup>

[*An antediluvian's Love Letter*]

September 17, 1793.

MY BELOVED SPOUSES,—

Whom I love better than Solomon loved his one spouse—or his one thousand. I lament that the summer is over; not because of its unicity, but because you two made it so delightful to me, that six weeks of gout could not sour it. Pray take care of yourselves—not for your own sakes, but for mine; for, as I have just had my quota of gout, I may possibly expect to see another summer; and, as you allow that I do know my own, and when I wish for anything and have it, am entirely satisfied, you may depend upon it that I shall be as happy with a third summer, if I reach it, as I have been with the two last.

<sup>1</sup> Then in Yorkshire.

Consider that I have been threescore years and ten looking for a society that I perfectly like ; and at last there dropped out of the clouds into Lady Herries's room two young gentlewomen, who I so little thought were sent thither on purpose for me, that when I was told they were the charming Miss Berrys, I would not even go to the side of the chamber where they sat. But, as Fortune never throws anything at one's head without hitting one, I soon found that the charming Berrys were precisely *ce qu'il me fallait* ; and that though young enough to be my great grand-daughters, lovely enough to turn the heads of all our youths, and sensible enough, if said youths have any brains, to set all their heads to rights again. Yes, sweet damsels, I have found that you can bear to pass half your time with an antediluvian, without discovering any *ennui* or disgust ; though his greatest merit towards you is, that he is not one of those old fools who fancy they are in love in their dotage. I have no such vagary ; though I am not sorry that some folks think I am so absurd, since it frets their selfishness.

### THOMAS CHATTERTON

1752-1770

THERE is nothing sadder in the whole of our literary history than the story which lies behind the three following letters. They were written by Thomas Chatterton during the few months which he spent in London during his pitiful attempt to find fame and fortune. The last of the three was despatched to his sister in Bristol only a few weeks before the 'marvellous boy', penniless and starving, yet too proud either to acknowledge defeat or beg for assistance, put an end to his life in his London garret. His pseudo-antiques, the Rowley poems, which he professed to have discovered in Canynge's chest in the muniment room of St. Mary Redcliffe, Bristol, were not published until after his death. The controversy which followed as to whether they were genuine or not continued with more or less bitterness for over half a century. 'When one remembers', writes Professor Masson at the end of his biography of the poet, 'that he was but seventeen years old when he died, and that most of his antiques were written fully a year before that time, little wonder that, with Coleridge, Wordsworth, and Keats, one looks back again and again on his brief existence with a kind of awe, as on the track of a heaven-shot meteor descending earthwards through a night of loom'.

## THOMAS CHATTERTON TO HIS MOTHER

[His '*Glorious Prospect*']

Shoreditch, London, May 6, 1770.

DEAR MOTHER,—

I am surprised that no letter has been sent in answer to my last. I am settled, and in such a settlement as I would desire. I get four guineas a month by one magazine; shall engage myself to write a History of England and other pieces, which will more than double that sum. Occasional essays in the daily papers would more than support me. What a glorious prospect! Mr. Wilkes knew me by my writings since I first corresponded with the booksellers here. . . . He affirmed that what Mr. Fell had of mine could not be the writings of a youth, and expressed a desire to know the author. . . . I am quite familiar at the Chapter Coffee-house, and know all the geniuses there. A character is now unnecessary; an author carries his character in his pen. My sister will improve herself in drawing. My grandmother is, I hope, well. Bristol's mercenary walls were never destined to hold me; there I was out of my element; now I am in it. London!—good God! how superior is London to that despicable place, Bristol. Here is none of your little meannesses, none of your mercenary securities, which disgrace that miserable hamlet. Dress, which is in Bristol an eternal fund of scandal, is here only introduced as a subject of praise: if a man dresses well, he has taste; if careless, he has his own reasons for so doing, and is prudent. Need I remind you of the contrast? The poverty of authors is a common observation, but not always a true one. No author can be poor who understands the arts of booksellers: without this necessary knowledge the greatest genius may starve, and with it the greatest dunce live in splendour. This knowledge I have pretty well dipped into. . . .

I remain yours, etc.,

T. CHATTERTON.

PS.—I have some trifling presents for my mother, sister, Thorne, etc.



## THOMAS CHATTERTON TO HIS SISTER

[*Brave Boasts*]Tom's Coffee-house, London,<sup>1</sup> May 30, 1770.

DEAR SISTER,—

There is such a noise of business and politics in the room that any inaccuracy in writing here is excusable. My present profession obliges me to frequent places of the best resort. To begin with what every female conversation begins with—dress : I employ my money now in fitting myself fashionably, and getting into good company. This last article always brings one in interest. But I have engaged to live with a gentleman, the brother of a lord (a Scotch one, indeed) who is going to advance pretty deeply in the bookselling business. I shall have board and lodging, genteel and elegant, gratis : this article, in the quarter of the town he lives in, with worse accommodation, would be £50 per annum. I shall likewise have no inconsiderable premium ; and assure yourself every month shall end to your advantage. I will send you two silks this summer ; and expect, in answer to this, what colours you prefer. My mother shall not be forgotten. My employment will be writing a voluminous History of London, to appear in numbers, the beginning of next winter. As this will not, like writing essays, oblige me to go to the coffee-house, I shall be able to serve you the more by it ; but it will necessitate me to go to Oxford, Cambridge, Lincoln, Coventry and every collegiate church near—not at all disagreeable journeys, and not to me expensive. The manuscript glossary I mentioned in my last must not be omitted. If money flowed as fast upon me as honours, I would give you a portion of £5,000. You have doubtless heard of the Lord Mayor's remonstrating and addressing the King ; but it will be a piece of news to inform you that *I* have been with the Lord Mayor on the occasion. Having addressed an essay to his Lordship, it was very well received—perhaps better than it deserved ; and I waited on his Lordship to have his approbation to address a second letter to him, on the subject of the remonstrance and its reception. His Lordship received me as politely as a citizen could, and warmly invited me to call on

<sup>1</sup> A favourite resort of the wits of the town.

him again. The rest is a secret.—But the Devil of the matter is, there is no money to be got on this side of the question.<sup>1</sup> Interest is on the other side. But he is a poor author who cannot write on both sides. I believe I may be introduced (and, if I am not, I'll introduce myself) to a ruling power in the Court party. I might have a recommendation to Sir George Colebrook, an East Indian Director, as qualified for an office no-ways despicable; but I shall not take a step to the sea whilst I can continue on land. . . . Essay-writing has this advantage—you are sure of constant pay; and when you have once wrote a piece which makes the author inquired after, you may bring the booksellers to your own terms. Essays on the patriotic side fetch no more than what the copy is sold for. As the patriots themselves are searching for a place, they have no gratuities to spare. So says one of the beggars in a temporary alteration of mine in the 'Jovial crew':—

A patriot was my occupation;  
 It got me a name, but no pelf;  
 Till, starved for the good of the nation,  
 I begged for the good of myself.  
 Fal, lal, etc.

I told them, if 'twas not for me,  
 Their freedoms would all go to pot;  
 I promised to set them all free,  
 But never a farthing I got.  
 Fal, lal, etc.

On the other hand, unpopular essays will not even be accepted, and you must pay to have them printed; but then, you seldom lose by it. Courtiers are so sensible of their deficiency in merit, that they generally reward all who know how to daub them with the appearance of it. . . . They publish the *Gospel Magazine* here. For a whim I write in it. I believe there are not any sent to Bristol; they are hardly worth the carriage—methodistical and unmeaning. With the usual ceremonies to my mother and grandmother, and sincerely, without ceremony, wishing them both happy—

<sup>1</sup> This is a reference to Chatterton's fruitless attempt to win distinction as a political writer on the 'patriotic', or Opposition side. The Lord Mayor Beckford was the city's champion in its struggle with the Government, and his presentation of the City's Remonstrance to the King had made him a popular idol.

when it is in my power to make them so, it shall be so—and with my kind remembrance to Miss Webb and Miss Thorne, I remain, as I ever was

Yours, etc., to the end of the chapter,

THOMAS CHATTERTON.

PS.—I am at this moment pierced through the heart by the black eye of a young lady, driving along in a hackney-coach. I am quite in love; if my love lasts till that time, you shall hear of it in my next.

THOMAS CHATTERTON TO HIS SISTER <sup>1</sup>

[*One month before his death*]

July 20, 1770.

I am now about an Oratorio, which, when finished, will purchase you a gown. You may be certain of seeing me before the 1st of January, 1771. . . . My mother may expect more patterns. Almost all the next *Town and Country Magazine* is mine. I have an universal acquaintance: my company is courted everywhere; and, could I humble myself to go into a compter, could have had twenty places before now. But I must be among the great; state matters suit me better than commercial. The ladies are not out of my acquaintance. I have a great deal of business now, and must therefore bid you adieu. You will have a longer letter from me soon, and more to the purpose.

Yours,

T. C.

TOBIAS SMOLLETT

1721-1771

SMOLLETT's letter of March 16, 1759, introduces him as the friend and associate of both Dr. Johnson and John Wilkes. Two men more different

<sup>1</sup> This is the last letter but one that Chatterton sent home. The last letter of all was to his mother, but that, unfortunately, is not extant. One of her neighbours, however, afterwards related how she found Mrs. Chatterton 'in tears and uneasy' owing to the nature of her son's letter—particularly owing to a passage in it in which he gave a strange story of his walking among the tombs in a churchyard and suddenly, in a fit of absent meditation, stumbling into an open grave. 'But', he had added, 'it was not the quick and the dead together', for he found under him the sexton who was digging the grave! There is nothing morbid or pessimistic, however, in the letter now printed: only the same eagerness to convey the impression that he was still on the high road to fame and fortune. Yet, when he wrote it, he probably was on the verge of starvation.

than these, as Boswell remarks, could perhaps not be selected out of all mankind. Yet Johnson and Jack Wilkes, though they bitterly attacked each other at various times, were subsequently brought together on perfectly friendly terms. Boswell's account of how he helped to bring about the reconciliation is one of the most delightful things in his great biography. Smollett's intervention on Johnson's behalf, to which the letter in question refers, was due to the fact that the doctor's negro servant had been sent to sea—not 'pressed', as his master had supposed, but of his own free will—and Johnson was anxious to effect his release from a state of life of which he always expressed the utmost abhorrence. 'No man', he said, 'will be a sailor who has contrivance enough to get himself into a jail; for being in a ship is being in a jail, with the chance of being drowned'. Wilkes at once yielded to Smollett's request, and succeeded in obtaining the discharge of Barber, who returned to Johnson's service. The second of the Smollett letters we are permitted to publish by the courtesy of the editor of *Notes and Queries*, in which it was printed—for the first time—on May 16, 1874. It was written in reply to a note from an admirer in America and gives an excellent summary of Smollett's career. His daughter Elizabeth, to whose loss he makes a pathetic reference at the end of his letter, died of consumption only a few weeks previously. Smollett was a devoted father. 'Many a time', he says in one of his letters, 'do I stop my task and betake me to a game of romps with Betty, while my wife looks on smiling, and longing in her heart to join in the sport'. He was never the same man after Betty's death, and only survived her eight years. 'All is well, my dear', were his last words to his devoted wife, who accompanied him to Italy and nursed him to the end.

TOBIAS SMOLLETT TO JOHN WILKES

[*An Appeal for Dr. Johnson's negro servant*]

Chelsea, March 16, 1759.

DEAR SIR,—

I am again your petitioner, in behalf of that great Cham<sup>1</sup> of literature, Samuel Johnson. His black servant, whose name is Francis Barber, has been pressed on board the *Stag Frigate*, Captain Angel, and our lexicographer is in great distress. He says the boy is a sickly lad, of a delicate frame, and particularly subject to a malady in his throat, which renders him very unfit for his Majesty's service. You know what manner of animosity the said Johnson has against you; and I dare say you desire no other opportunity of resenting it than that of laying him under an obligation. He was humble enough to desire my assistance on this occasion,

<sup>1</sup> 'Cham, the title of the Sovereign of Tartary', writes Boswell, 'is well applied to Johnson, the Monarch of Literature; and was an epithet familiar to Smollett. See *Roderick Random*, chap. 56'.

though he and I were never cater-cousins; and I gave him to understand that I would make application to my friend Mr. Wilkes, who, perhaps, by his interest with Dr. Hay and Mr. Elliot, might be able to procure the discharge of his lacquey. It would be superfluous to say more on the subject, which I leave to your consideration; but I cannot let slip this opportunity of declaring that I am, with the most unviolable esteem and attachment, dear Sir, your affectionate, obliged, humble servant,

T. SMOLLETT.

TOBIAS SMOLLETT TO RICHARD SMITH, RECORDER OF THE  
CITY OF BURLINGTON, NEW JERSEY

[*His Autobiography in Brief*]

\*

London, May 8, 1763.

SIR,—

I am favoured with yours of the 26th of February, and cannot but be pleased to find myself, as a writer, so high in your esteem. The curiosity you express with regard to the particulars of my life, and the variety of situations in which I may have been, cannot be gratified within the compass of a letter: besides, there are some particulars of my life which it would ill become me to relate. The only similitude between the circumstances of my own fortune and those I have attributed to Roderick Random, consists in my being of a reputable family in Scotland, in my being bred a surgeon and having served as a surgeon's mate on board a man of war during the Expedition to Carthage. The low situations in which I have exhibited Roderick, I never experienced in my own person. I married very young, a native of Jamaica, a young lady well known and universally respected under the name of Miss Nancy Lassells, and by her I enjoy a comfortable though moderate estate in that island. I practised surgery in London, after having improved myself by travelling in France and other countries till the year 1749, when I took my degree of doctor in medicine, and have lived ever since in Chelsea (I hope) with credit and reputation. No man



knows better than Mr. Rivington<sup>1</sup> what time I employed in writing the four first volumes of the *History of England*; and indeed the short period in which that work was finished appears almost incredible to myself, when I recollect that I turned over and consulted above three hundred volumes in the course of my labour. Mr. Rivington likewise knows that I spent the best part of a year in revising, correcting and improving the quarto edition which is now going to press, and will be continued in the same style to the late Peace. Whatever reputation I may have got by this work has been dearly bought by the loss of health, which I am of opinion I shall never retrieve. I am now going to the South of France in order to try the effect of that climate; and very probably I shall never return. I am much obliged to you for the hope you express that I have obtained some provision from his Majesty, but the truth is, I have neither pension nor place, nor am I of that disposition which can stoop to solicit either. I have always piqued myself upon my independency and I trust, in God, I shall preserve it to my dying day.

Exclusive of some small detached performances that have been published occasionally in papers and magazines, the following is a genuine list of my productions:—*Roderick Random*, the *Regicide*, a *Tragedy*, a Translation of *Gil Blas*, a Translation of *Don Quixote*, an *Essay upon the External use of Water*, *Peregrine Pickle*, *Ferdinand Count Fathom*, *Great Part of the Critical Review*, a very small part of a compendium of voyages, the *Complete History of England and Continuation*, a small part of the *Modern Universal History*, some pieces in the *British Magazine*, comprehending the whole of *Sir Launcelot Greaves*, a small part of the Translations of Voltaire's works, including all the notes, historical and critical, to be found in that Translation. I am much mortified to find it is believed in America that I have lent my name to Booksellers: that is a species of Prostitution of which I am altogether incapable. I had engaged with Mr. Rivington, and made some progress in a work exhibiting the present state of the world: which work I shall finish if I recover my health. If you should see Mr. Rivington, please give my kindest compli-

<sup>1</sup> A London bookseller who had carried his business to America, where he published newspapers in the interest of the Royalists. In 1775 his office was destroyed by the Whigs, and his types carried off to be converted into bullets.

ments to him ; tell him I wish him all manner of Happiness, though I have little to expect for my own share, having lost my only child, a fine girl of fifteen, whose death has overwhelmed myself and my wife with unutterable sorrow.

I have now complied with your request, and beg in my turn you will commend me to all my friends in America. I have endeavoured more than once to do the Colonies some service ; and I am

Sir

Your very humble servant,

TOBIAS SMOLLETT.

### OLIVER GOLDSMITH

1728-1774

THE letters of Goldsmith are among the most graphic and touching of all these 'human documents' of literature. In the first of the following series Goldsmith gives a characteristic account of his adventures after making his false start for America from his home in Ireland. We cannot but think that the letter, as Washington Irving says in his life of the poet, 'was here and there touched up a little with the fanciful pen of the future essayist, with a view to amuse his mother and soften her vexation ; but even in these respects it is valuable, as showing the early play of his humour, and his happy knack of extracting sweets from that worldly experience which to others yields nothing but bitterness'. There was much in his later experiences in London that yielded little but bitterness even to brave-hearted Goldsmith, as some of his other letters plainly indicate. Take, for instance, the letter to Griffiths, the bookseller whose literary hack he had been. Griffiths had lent him, or become security for, a small sum of money which enabled Goldsmith to buy a suit of clothes to wear at his luckless examination at Surgeons' Hall, Goldsmith agreeing to refund the amount in the shape of book-reviews. Unfortunately, his landlord was just then thrown into prison for debt, and Goldsmith pawned the suit to obtain his release, also handing over the books which he had reviewed as security for a small loan advanced by a neighbour to relieve Goldsmith's own immediate wants. As ill-luck would have it, Griffiths discovered the suit of clothes at the pawnbroker's, and, in the acrimonious correspondence which ensued, he called Goldsmith a knave and sharper, threatening him also with prosecution and a prison. The third of the following letters is Goldsmith's reply. The quarrel was afterwards patched up, but never mended thoroughly. Goldsmith was still suffering from his harsh treatment by Griffiths, and the disappointment caused by his failure at Surgeons' Hall, when he wrote the letter to his brother Henry from his dingy quarters in Green Arbour Court. Eleven years later, in his letter to his brother Maurice, we find the Goldsmiths, as Washington Irving has it, 'the same shifting, shiftless race as formerly ; a "shattered family", scrambling on each other's back as soon as any rise above the surface'.

Oliver himself, in spite of his literary success—for his *Chinese Letters*, his *Traveller*, and his *Vicar of Wakefield*, had all been published in the intervening years, as well as many minor writings—was not much better off financially, his ‘heedless improvidence eating up the pay of the book-sellers in advance’. Most of the remaining letters represent Goldsmith in his more prosperous middle age, the last being his reply to Mrs. Bunbury’s invitation to spend the Christmas holidays at Barton. The letter is written in the playful vein which always characterized his intercourse with this delightful family. Every one must regret, with Washington Irving, ‘that we have no record of this Christmas visit to Barton; that the poet had no Boswell to follow at his heels, and take note of all his sayings and doings. We can only picture him in our minds, casting off all care; enacting the lord of misrule; presiding at the Christmas revels; providing all kinds of merriment: keeping the card-table in an uproar, and finally opening the ball on the first day of the year in his spring-velvet suit, with the Jessamy Bride for a partner’.

#### OLIVER GOLDSMITH TO HIS MOTHER

[*His false start for America*]

MY DEAR MOTHER,—

If you will sit down and calmly listen to what I say, you shall be fully resolved in every one of those many questions you have asked me. I went to Cork, and converted my horse, which you prize so much higher than Fiddle-back, into cash, took my passage in a ship bound for America, and, at the same time, paid the captain for my freight and all the other expenses of my voyage. But it so happened that the wind did not answer for three weeks; and you know, mother, that I could not command the elements. My misfortune was, that, when the wind served, I happened to be with a party in the country, and my friend the captain never inquired after me, but set sail with as much indifference as if I had been on board. The remainder of my time I employed in the city and its environs, viewing everything curious, and you know no one can starve while he has money in his pocket.

Reduced, however, to my last two guineas, I began to think of my dear mother and friends whom I had left behind me, and so bought that generous beast Fiddle-back, and bade adieu to Cork with only five shillings in my pocket. This, to be sure, was but a scanty allowance for man and horse towards a journey of above a hundred miles; but I did not despair, for I knew I must find friends on the road.

I recollected particularly an old and faithful acquaintance I made at college, who had often and earnestly pressed me to spend a summer with him, and he lived but eight miles from Cork. This circumstance of vicinity he would expatiate on to me with peculiar emphasis. 'We shall', says he, 'enjoy the delights of both city and country, and you shall command my stable and my purse'.

However, upon the way, I met a poor woman all in tears, who told me her husband had been arrested for a debt he was not able to pay, and that his eight children must now starve, bereaved as they were of his industry, which had been their only support. I thought myself at home, being not far from my good friend's house, and therefore parted with a moiety of all my store; and pray, mother, ought I not have given her the other half-crown, for what she got would be of little use to her? However, I soon arrived at the mansion of my affectionate friend, guarded by the vigilance of a huge mastiff, who flew at me, and would have torn me to pieces but for the assistance of a woman, whose countenance was not less grim than that of the dog; yet she with great humanity relieved me from the jaws of this Cerberus, and was prevailed on to carry up my name to her master.

Without suffering me to wait long, my old friend, who was then recovering from a severe fit of sickness, came down in his nightcap, nightgown, and slippers, and embraced me with the most cordial welcome, showed me in, and, after giving me a history of his indisposition, assured me that he considered himself peculiarly fortunate in having under his roof the man he most loved on earth, and whose stay with him must, above all things, contribute to his perfect recovery. I now repented sorely I had not given the poor woman the other half-crown, as I thought all my bills of humanity would be punctually answered by this worthy man. I revealed to him my whole soul; I opened to him all my distresses; and freely owned that I had but one half-crown in my pocket; but that now, like a ship after weathering out the storm, I considered myself secure in a safe and hospitable harbour. He made no answer, but walked about the room, rubbing his hands as one in deep study. This I imputed to the sympathetic feelings of a tender heart, which increased my esteem for him, and as that increased, I gave the most favourable interpretation



to his silence. I construed it into delicacy of sentiment, as if he dreaded to wound my pride by expressing his commiseration in words, leaving his generous conduct to speak for itself.

It now approached six o'clock in the evening; and as I had eaten no breakfast, and as my spirits were raised, my appetite for dinner grew uncommonly keen. At length the old woman came into the room with two plates, one spoon, and a dirty cloth, which she laid upon the table. This appearance, without increasing my spirits, did not diminish my appetite. My protectress soon returned with a small bowl of sago, a small porringer of sour milk, a loaf of stale brown bread, and the heel of an old cheese all over crawling with mites. My friend apologised that his illness obliged him to live on slops, and that better fare was not in the house; observing, at the same time, that a milk diet was certainly the most healthful; and at eight o'clock he again recommended a regular life, declaring that for his part he would *lie down with the lamb and rise with the lark*. My hunger was at this time so exceedingly sharp that I wished for another slice of the loaf, but was obliged to go to bed without even that refreshment.

This lenten entertainment I had received made me resolve to depart as soon as possible; accordingly, next morning, when I spoke of going, he did not oppose my resolution; he rather commended my design, adding some very sage counsel upon the occasion. 'To be sure', said he, 'the longer you stay away from your mother the more you will grieve her and your other friends; and possibly they are already afflicted at hearing of this foolish expedition you have made'. Notwithstanding all this, and without any hope of softening such a sordid heart, I again renewed the tale of my distress, and asking 'how he thought I could travel above a hundred miles upon one half-crown?' I begged to borrow a single guinea which I assured him should be repaid with thanks. 'And you know, sir', said I, 'it is no more than I have done for you'. To which he firmly answered, 'Why, look you, Mr. Goldsmith, that is neither here nor there, I have paid you all you ever lent me, and this sickness of mine has left me bare of cash. But I have bethought myself of a conveyance for you; sell your horse, and I will furnish you a much better one to ride



on'. I readily grasped at his proposal, and begged to see the nag; on which he led me to his bed chamber, and from under the bed he pulled out a stout oak stick. 'Here he is', said he; 'take this in your hand, and it will carry you to your mother's with more safety than such a horse as you ride'. I was in doubt, when I got it into my hand, whether I should not, in the first place apply it to his pate; but a rap at the street door made the wretch fly to it, and when I returned to the parlour, he introduced me, as if nothing of the kind had happened, to the gentleman who entered, as Mr. Goldsmith, his most ingenious and worthy friend, of whom he had so often heard him speak with rapture. I could scarcely compose myself; and must have betrayed indignation in my mien to the stranger, who was a counsellor-at-law in the neighbourhood, a man of engaging aspect and polite address.

After spending an hour, he asked my friend and me to dine with him at his house. This I declined at first, as I wished to have no further communication with my hospitable friend; but at the solicitation of both I at last consented, determined as I was by two motives; one, that I was prejudiced in favour of the looks and manner of the counsellor; and the other, that I stood in need of a comfortable dinner. And there, indeed, I found everything that I could wish, abundance without profusion, and elegance without affectation. In the evening, when my old friend, who had eaten very plentifully at his neighbour's table, but talked again of lying down with the lamb, made a motion to me for retiring, our generous host requested I should take a bed with him, upon which I plainly told my old friend that he might go home and take care of the horse he had given me, but that I should never re-enter his doors. He went away with a laugh, leaving me to add this to the other little things the counsellor already knew of his plausible neighbour.

And now, my dear mother, I found sufficient to reconcile me to all my follies; for here I spent three whole days. The counsellor had two sweet girls to his daughters, who played enchantingly on the harpsichord; and yet it was but a melancholy pleasure I felt the first time I heard them: for that being the first time also that either of them had touched the instrument since their mother's death, I saw the tears in silence trickle down their father's cheeks. I every day endeavoured

to go away, but every day was pressed and obliged to stay. On my going, the counsellor offered me his purse, with a horse and servant to convey me home; but the latter I declined, and only took a guinea to bear my necessary expenses on the road.

OLIVER GOLDSMITH.

To Mrs. Anne Goldsmith, Ballymahon.

OLIVER GOLDSMITH TO HIS KINSMAN, DANIEL HODSON

*[His early struggles in London]*

*December 27, 1757.*

IT may be four years since my last letters went to Ireland, and from you in particular, I received no answer, probably because you never wrote to me. My brother Charles, however, informs me of the fatigue you were at in soliciting a subscription to assist me, not only among my friends and relations, but acquaintances in general. Though my pride might feel some repugnance in being thus relieved, yet my gratitude can suffer no diminution. How much am I obliged to you, to them, for such generosity, or (why should not your virtues have the proper name?) for such charity to me at that juncture. Sure I am born to ill fortune, to be so much a debtor, and unable to repay. But to say no more of this; too many professions of gratitude are often considered indirect petitions for future favours. Let me only add, that my not receiving that supply, was the cause of my present establishment in London. You may easily imagine what difficulties I had to encounter, left as I was without friends, recommendations, money, or impudence, and that in a country where being born an Irishman was sufficient to keep me unemployed. Many in such circumstances would have had recourse to the friar's end, or the suicide's halter. But with all my follies, I had principle to resist the one, and resolution to combat the other.

I suppose you desire to know my present situation: as there is nothing in it at which I should blush, or which mankind could censure, I see no reason for making it a secret. In short, by a very little practice as a physician, and a very

little reputation as a poet, I make a shift to live. Nothing is more apt to introduce us to the gates of the Muses than poverty; but it were well for us if they only left us at the door; the mischief is, they sometimes choose to give us their company at the entertainments; and Want, instead of being gentleman-usher, often turns master of the ceremonies. Thus, upon hearing I write, no doubt you imagine I starve: and the name of an author naturally reminds you of a garret. In this particular I do not think proper to undeceive my friends; but whether I eat or starve, live in first floor, or four pairs of stairs high, I still remember them with ardour. Nay, my very country comes in for a share of my affection: unaccountable fondness for country, this *maladie du pays*, as the French call it; unaccountable that he should still have an affection for a place, who never received, when in it, but common civility; who never brought anything out of it except his brogue and his blunders. Surely my affection is equally ridiculous with the Scotchman's, who refused to be cured of the itch, because it made him 'unco thoughtful of his wife and bonnie Inverary'. But now to be serious, let me ask myself what gives me a wish to see Ireland again? The country is a fine one perhaps. No. There are good company in Ireland. No. Then perhaps there is more wit and learning among the Irish. Oh, Lord! No. There has been more money spent in the encouragement of the Podareen mare there in one season, than given in rewards to learned men since the time of Usher. All their productions in learning amount to perhaps a translation, or a few tracts in divinity, and all their productions in wit to just nothing at all. Why the plague, then, so fond of Ireland? Then all at once, because you, my dear friend, and a few men who are exceptions to the general picture, have a residence there. This it is that gives me all the pangs I feel in separation. I confess I carry this spirit sometimes to the souring the pleasures I at present possess. If I go to the opera, where Signora Columba pours out all the mazes of melody, I sit and sigh for Lishoy fireside, and Johnny Armstrong's Last Good Night from Peggy Golden. If I climb Hampstead Hill, than where nature never exhibited a more magnificent prospect, I confess it fine, but then I had rather be placed upon the little mount before Lishoy gate, and then take in, to me, the most

pleasing horizon in nature. Before Charles came hither, my thoughts sometimes found refuge from severe studies among my friends in Ireland. I fancied strange revolutions at home ; but I find it was the rapidity of my own motion that gave an imaginary one to objects really at rest. No alterations there. Some friends, he tells me are still lean, but very rich ; others very fat, but still very poor. Nay, all the news I hear of you is, that you and Mrs. Hodson sometimes sally out in visits among the neighbours. and sometimes make a migration from the blue bed to the brown. I could from my heart wish that you and she, and Lishoy, and Ballymahon, and all of you, would fairly make a migration into Middlesex ; though upon second thoughts, this might be attended with a few inconveniences. Therefore, as the mountain will not come to Mahomet, why Mahomet shall go to the mountain ; or, to speak plain English, as you cannot conveniently pay me a visit, if next summer I can contrive to be absent six weeks from London, I shall spend three of them among my friends in Ireland ; but first believe me, my design is purely to visit, and neither to cut a figure, nor levy contributions ; neither to excite envy, nor solicit favour. In fact, my circumstances are adapted to neither. I am too poor to be gazed at, and too rich to need assistance.

You see, dear Dan, how long I have been talking about myself ; but attribute my vanity to my affection, as every man is fond of himself ; and I consider you as a second self, and imagine you will consequently be pleased with these instances of egotism. . . . My dear sir, these things give me real uneasiness, and I could wish to redress them. But at present there is hardly a thing done in Europe in which I am not a debtor. I have already discharged my most threatening and pressing demands, for we must be just before we can be grateful. For the rest I need not say, (you know I am),

Your affectionate kinsman,

OLIVER GOLDSMITH.

Temple Exchange Coffee-house,

Near Temple-Bar

(Where you may direct an answer).

OLIVER GOLDSMITH TO RALPH GRIFFITHS

*[His reply to the grinding bookseller]*

January, 1759.

SIR,—

I know of no misery but a jail to which my own imprudences and your letter seem to point. I have seen it inevitable these three or four weeks, and, by heavens! request it as a favour—as a favour that may prevent something more fatal. I have been some years struggling with a wretched being—with all that contempt and indigence bring with it—with all those passions which make contempt insupportable. What, then, has a jail that is formidable? I shall at least have the society of wretches, and such is to me true society. I tell you, again and again, that I am neither able nor willing to pay you a farthing, but I will be punctual to any appointment you or the tailor shall make; thus far, at least, I do not act the sharper, since, unable to pay my own debts one way, I would generally give some security another. No, sir; had I been a sharper—had I been possessed of less good nature and native generosity, I might surely now have been in better circumstances.

I am guilty, I own, of meannesses which poverty unavoidably brings with it: my reflections are filled with repentance for my imprudence, but not with any remorse for being a villain; that may be a character you unjustly charge me with. Your books, I can assure you, are neither pawned nor sold, but in the custody of a friend, from whom my necessities obliged me to borrow some money: whatever becomes of my person, you shall have them in a month. It is very possible both the reports you have heard, and your own suggestions, may have brought you false information with respect to my character; it is very possible that the man whom you now regard with detestation may inwardly burn with grateful resentment. It is very possible that, upon a second perusal of the letter I sent you, you may see the workings of a mind strongly agitated with gratitude and jealousy. If such circumstances should appear, at least spare invective till my book with Mr. Dodsley shall be published, and then, perhaps, you may see the bright side of a mind, when my professions shall not appear the dictates of necessity, but of choice.



You seem to think Dr. Milner knew me not. Perhaps so ; but he was a man I shall ever honour ; but I have friendships only with the dead ! I ask pardon for taking up so much time ; nor shall I add to it by any other professions than that I am, sir, your humble servant,

OLIVER GOLDSMITH.

PS.—I shall expect impatiently the result of your resolutions.

OLIVER GOLDSMITH TO HIS BROTHER HENRY

[*Disappointed hopes*]

London, 1759.

DEAR SIR,—

Your punctuality in answering a man whose trade is writing, is more than I had reason to expect ; and yet you see me generally fill a whole sheet, which is all the recompense I can make for being so frequently troublesome. The behaviour of Mr. Wells and Mr. Lawder is a little extraordinary. However, their answering neither you nor me is a sufficient indication of their disliking the employment which I assigned them. As their conduct is different from what I had expected, so I have made an alteration in mine. I shall, the beginning of next month, send over two hundred and fifty books<sup>1</sup>, which are all that I fancy can be well sold among you, and I would have you make some distinction in the persons who have subscribed. The money, which will amount to sixty pounds, may be left with Mr. Bradley as soon as possible. I am not certain but I shall quickly have occasion for it.

I have met with no disappointment with respect to my East India voyage, nor are my resolutions altered ; though, at the same time, I must confess it gives me some pain to think I am almost beginning the world at the age of thirty-one. Though I never had a day's sickness since I saw you, yet I am not that strong, active man you once knew me. You scarcely can conceive how much eight years of disappointment, anguish, and study, have worn me down. If I remember right you are seven or eight years older than me, yet I dare venture

<sup>1</sup> The *Inquiry into Polite Literature*. His previous remarks apply to the subscription.

to say, that if a stranger saw us both, he would pay me the honours of seniority. Imagine to yourself a pale, melancholy visage, with too great wrinkles between the eyebrows, with an eye disgustingly severe, and a big wig ; and you may have a perfect picture of my present appearance. On the other hand, I conceive you as perfectly sleek and healthy, passing many a happy day among your own children, or those who knew you a child.

Since I knew what it was to be a man, this is a pleasure I have not known. I have passed my days among a parcel of cool, designing beings, and have contracted all their suspicious manner in my own behaviour. I should actually be as unfit for the society of my friends at home, as I detest that which I am obliged to partake of here. I can now neither partake of the pleasure of a revel, nor contribute to raise its jollity. I can neither laugh nor drink ; have contracted a hesitating, disagreeable manner of speaking, and a visage that looks ill-nature itself : in short, I have thought myself into a settled melancholy, and an utter disgust of all that life brings with it. Whence this romantic turn that all our family are possessed with ? Whence this love for every place and every country but that in which we reside—for every occupation but our own ? This desire of fortune, and yet this eagerness to dissipate ? I perceive, my dear sir, that I am at intervals for indulging this splenetic manner, and following my own taste, regardless of yours.

The reasons you have given me for breeding up your son a scholar are judicious and convincing ; I should, however, be glad to know for what particular profession he is designed. If he be assiduous and divested of strong passions (for passions in youth always lead to pleasure), he may do very well in your college ; for it must be owned that the industrious poor have good encouragement there—perhaps better than in any other in Europe. But if he has ambition, strong passions, and an exquisite sensibility of contempt, do not send him there, unless you have no other trade for him but your own. It is impossible to conceive how much may be done by proper education at home. A boy, for instance, who understands perfectly well Latin, French, arithmetic, and the principles of the civil law, and can write a fine hand, has an education that may qualify him for any undertaking ; and these parts of learn-

ing should be carefully inculcated, let him be designed for whatever calling he will.

Above all things, let him never touch a romance or novel: these paint beauty in colours more charming than nature, and describe happiness that man never tastes. How delusive, how destructive are those pictures of consummate bliss. They teach the youthful mind to sigh after beauty and happiness that never existed; to despise the little good which fortune has mixed in our cup, by expecting more than she ever gave; and, in general, take the word of a man who has seen the world, and who has studied human nature more by experience than precept—take my word for it, I say, that books teach us very little of the world. The greatest merit in a state of poverty would only serve to make the possessor ridiculous—may distress, but cannot relieve him. Frugality, and even avarice, in the lower orders of mankind, are true ambition. These afford the only ladder for the poor to rise to preferment. Teach then, my dear sir, to your son, thrift and economy. Let his poor wandering uncle's example be placed before his eyes. I had learned from books to be disinterested and generous, before I was taught from experience the necessity of being prudent. I had contracted the habits and notions of a philosopher, while I was exposing myself to the approaches of insidious cunning; and often, by being even with my narrow finances, charitable to excess, I forgot the rules of justice, and placed myself in the very situation of the wretch who thanked me for my bounty. When I am in the remotest part of the world, tell him this, and perhaps he may improve from my example. But I find myself again falling into my gloomy habits of thinking.

My mother, I am informed, is almost blind; even though I had the utmost inclination to return home, under such circumstances I could not, for to behold her in distress without a capacity of relieving her from it, would add much to my splenetic habit. Your last letter was much too short; it should have answered some queries I had made in my former. Just sit down as I do, and write forward until you have filled all your paper. It requires no thought, at least from the ease with which my own sentiments rise when they are addressed to you. For believe me, my head has no share in all I write; my heart dictates the whole. Pray give my love to Bob

Bryanton, and entreat him from me not to drink. My dear sir, give me some account about poor Jenny.<sup>1</sup> Yet her husband loves her : if so, she cannot be unhappy.

I know not whether I should tell you—yet why should I conceal these trifles, or, indeed, anything from you ? There is a book of mine will be published in a few days : the life of a very extraordinary man—no less than the great Voltaire. You know already by the title that it is no more than a catch-penny. However, I spent but four weeks on the whole performance, for which I received twenty pounds. When published, I shall take some method of conveying it to you, unless you may think it dear of the postage, which may amount to four or five shillings. However, I fear you will not find an equivalent of amusement.

Your last letter, I repeat it, was too short ; you should have given me your opinion of the design of the heroic-comical poem which I sent you. You remember I intended to introduce the hero of the poem as lying in a paltry alehouse. You may take the following specimen of the manner, which I flatter myself is quite original. The room in which he lies may be described somewhat in this way :

‘ The window, patched with paper, lent a ray  
That feebly show’d the state in which he lay ;  
The sanded floor that grits beneath the tread,  
The humid wall with paltry pictures spread ;  
The game of goose was there exposed to view,  
And the twelve rules the royal martyr drew ;  
The Seasons, framed with listing, found a place,  
And Prussia’s monarch showed his lamp-black face.  
The morn was cold ; he views with keen desire  
A rusty grate unconscious of a fire ;  
An unpaid reckoning on the fricze was scored,  
And five crack’d teacups dress’d the chimney board.’

And now imagine, after his soliloquy, the landlord to make his appearance in order to dun him for the reckoning :

‘ Not with that face, so servile and so gay,  
That welcomes every stranger that can pay :  
With sulky eye he smoked the patient man,  
Then pull’d his breeches tight, and thus began, etc.’<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> His sister, Mrs. Johnson, whose marriage, in pecuniary matters, was unfortunate.

<sup>2</sup> The projected poem, of which the above were specimens, appears never to have been completed.

All this is taken, you see, from nature. It is a good remark of Montaigne's, that the wisest men often have friends with whom they do not care how much they play the fool. Take my present follies as instances of my regard. Poetry is a much easier and more agreeable species of composition than prose; and, could a man live by it, it were not unpleasant employment to be a poet. I am resolved to leave no space, though I should fill it up only by telling you, what you very well know already, I mean that I am your most affectionate friend and brother,

OLIVER GOLDSMITH.

OLIVER GOLDSMITH TO HIS BROTHER MAURICE

[*Empty Honours*]

London, *January*, 1770.

DEAR BROTHER,—

I should have answered your letter sooner, but, in truth, I am not fond of thinking of the necessities of those I love, when it is so very little in my power to help them. I am sorry to find you are every way unprovided for; and what adds to my uneasiness is, that I have received a letter from my sister Johnson, by which I learn that she is pretty much in the same circumstances. As to myself, I believe I think I could get both you and my poor brother-in-law something like that which you desire; but I am determined never to ask for little things, nor exhaust any little interest I may have, until I can serve you, him, and myself, more effectually. As yet, no opportunity has offered; but I believe you are pretty well convinced that I will not be remiss when it arrives.

The king has lately been pleased to make me Professor of Ancient History in the Royal Academy of Painting which he has just established, but there is no salary annexed; and I took it rather as a compliment to the institution than any benefit to myself. Honours to one in my situation are something like ruffles to one that wants a shirt.

You tell me that there are fourteen or fifteen pounds left me in the hands of my cousin Lawder, and you ask me what I would have done with them. My dear brother, I would by no means give any directions to my dear worthy relations at



Kilmore how to dispose of money which is, properly speaking, more theirs than mine. All that I can say is, that I entirely, and this letter will serve to witness, give up any right and title to it ; and I am sure they will dispose of it to the best advantage. To them I entirely leave it ; whether they or you may think the whole necessary to fit you out, or whether our poor sister Johnson may not want the half, I leave entirely to their and your discretion. The kindness of that good couple to our shattered family demands our sincerest gratitude ; and, though they have almost forgotten me, yet, if good things at last arrive, I hope one day to return and increase their good humour by adding to my own.

I have sent my cousin Jenny a miniature picture of myself, as I believe it is the most acceptable present I can offer. I have ordered it to be left for her at George Faulkner's, folded in a letter. The face, you will know, is ugly enough ; but it is finely painted. I will shortly also send my friends over the Shannon some mezzotinto prints of myself, and some more of my friends here, such as Burke, Johnson, Reynolds, and Colman. I believe I have written a hundred letters to different friends in your country, and never received an answer to any of them. I do not know how to account for this, or why they are unwilling to keep up for me those regards which I must ever retain for them.

If, then, you have a mind to oblige me, you will write often, whether I answer you or not. Let me particularly have the news of our family and old acquaintances. For instance, you may begin by telling me about the family where you reside, how they spend their time, and whether they ever make mention of me. Tell me about my mother, my brother Hodson and his son, my brother Harry's son and daughter, my sister Johnson, the family of Ballyoughter, what is become of them, where they live, and how they do. You talked of being my only brother : I don't understand you. Where is Charles ? A sheet of paper occasionally filled with the news of this kind would make me very happy, and would keep you nearer my mind. As it is, my dear brother, believe me to be,

Yours, most affectionately,

OLIVER GOLDSMITH.

OLIVER GOLDSMITH TO BENNET LANGTON

[*Town and Country Gossip*]

September 7, 1772.

MY DEAR SIR,—

Since I had the pleasure of seeing you last, I have been almost wholly in the country at a farmer's house, quite alone, trying to write a comedy. It is now finished ; but when or how it will be acted, or whether it will be acted at all, are questions I cannot resolve. I am therefore so much employed upon that, that I am under the necessity of putting off my intended visit to Lincolnshire for this season. Reynolds is just returned from Paris, and finds himself now in the case of a truant that must make up for his idle time by diligence. We have therefore agreed to postpone our journey till next summer, when we hope to have the honour of waiting upon Lady Rothes and you, and staying double the time of our late intended visit. We often meet, and never without remembering you. I see Mr. Beauclerc very often both in town and country. He is now going directly forward to become a second Boyle ; deep in chemistry and physics. Johnson has been down on a visit to a country parson, Dr. Taylor ; and is returned to his haunts at Mrs. Thrale's. Burke is a farmer, *en attendant* a better place ; but visiting about too. Every soul is visiting about and merry but myself. And that is hard too, as I have been trying these three months to do something to make people laugh. There have I been strolling about the hedges, studying jests with a most tragical countenance. The *Natural History* is about half finished, and I will shortly finish the rest. God knows I am tired of this kind of finishing, which is but bungling work ; and that not so much my fault as the fault of my scurvy circumstances. They begin to talk in town of the Opposition's gaining ground ; the cry of liberty is still as loud as ever. I have published, or Davies has published for me, an *Abridgement of the History of England*, for which I have been a good deal abused in the newspapers, for betraying the liberties of the people. God knows I had no thought for or against liberty in my head ; my whole aim being to make up a book of a decent size, that as, Squire Richard says, *would do no harm to nobody*. However, they

set me down as an errant Tory, and consequently an honest man. When you come to look at any part of it, you'll say that I am a sore Whig. God bless you, and with my most respectful compliments to her ladyship, I remain, dear Sir, you most affectionate humble servant,

OLIVER GOLDSMITH.

OLIVER GOLDSMITH TO MRS. BUNBURY

*[His playful reply to a Christmas invitation]*

*December, 1772.*

MADAM,—

I read your letter with all that allowance which critical candour could require, but after all find so much to object to, and so much to raise my indignation, that I cannot help giving it a serious answer.—I am not so ignorant, madam, as not to see there are many sarcasms contained in it, and solecisms also. (Solecism is a word that comes from the town of Soleis in Attica, among the Greeks, built by Solon, and applied as we use the word Kidderminster for curtains from a town also of that name—but this is learning you have no taste for!) —I say, madam, there are many sarcasms in it, and solecisms also. But not to seem an ill-natured critic, I'll take leave to quote your own words, and give you my remarks upon them as they occur. You begin as follows :

I hope, my good Doetor, you soon will be here,  
And your spring-velvet coat very smart will appear,  
To open our ball the first day of the year.

Pray, madam, where did you ever find the cpithet 'good' applied to the title of doctor? Had you called me 'learned doctor', or 'grave doctor', or 'noble doctor', it might be allowable, because they belong to the profession. But, not to cavil at trifles, you talk of my 'spring-velvet coat', and advise me to wear it the first day in the year, that is, in the middle of winter!—a spring-velvet coat in the middle of winter!!! That would be a solecism indeed! and yet, to increase the inconsistence, in another part of your letter you call me a beau. Now, on one side or other you must be wrong. If I am a beau, I can never think of wearing a

spring-velvet in winter ; and if I am not a beau, why then, that explains itself. But let me go on to your two next strange lines :

And bring with you a wig, that is modish and gay,  
To dance with the girls that are makers of hay.

The absurdity of making hay at Christmas you yourself seem sensible of : you say your sister will laugh ; and so indeed she well may ! The Latins have an expression for a contemptuous kind of laughter, *naso contemnere adunco* ; that is, to laugh with a crooked nose. She may laugh at you in the manner of the ancients if she thinks fit. But now I come to the most extraordinary of all extraordinary propositions, which is, to take your and your sister's advice in playing at loo. The presumption of the offer raises my indignation beyond the bounds of prose ; it inspires me at once with verse and resentment. I take advice ? and from whom ? You shall hear :

First let me suppose, what may shortly be true,  
The company set, and the word to be Loo :  
All smirking, and pleasant, and big with adventure,  
And ogling the stake which is fixed in the centre.  
Round and round go the cards, while I inwardly damn  
At never once finding a visit from Pam.  
I lay down my stake, apparently cool,  
While the harpies about me all pocket the pool.  
I fret in my gizzard, yet, cautious and sly,  
I wish all my friends may be bolder than I :  
Yet still they sit snug, not a creature will aim  
By losing their money to venture at fame. . . .  
'What does Mrs. Bunbury ? ! . . . 'I, Sir ? I pass'.  
'Pray what does Miss Horneck ? take courage, come, do',  
'Who, I ? let me see, Sir, why I must pass too'.  
Mr. Bunbury frets, and I fret like the devil,  
To see them so cowardly, lucky, and civil.  
Yet still I sit snug, and continue to sigh on,  
Till, made by my losses as bold as a lion,  
I venture at all, while my avarice regards  
The whole pool as my own . . . 'Come, give me five cards'.  
'Well done !' cry the ladies : 'Ah, Doctor, that's good !'  
The pool's very rich, . . . ah ! the Doctor is loo'd !'  
Thus foil'd in my courage, on all sides perplexed,  
I ask for advice from the lady that's next'.  
'Pray, ma'am, be so good as to give your advice :  
Don't you think the best way is to venture for't twice ?'  
'I advise', cries the lady, 'to try it, I own. . . .'

' Ah ! the Doctor is loo'd ! Come, Doctor, put down '.  
 Thus, playing, and playing, I still grow more eager,  
 And so bold, and so bold, I'm at last a bold beggar.  
 Now, ladies, I ask, if law matters you're skill'd in,  
 Whether crimes such as yours should not come before Fielding  
 For giving advice that is not worth a straw,  
 May well be call'd picking of pockets in law ;  
 And picking of pockets, with which I now charge ye,  
 Is, by quinto Elizabeth, Death without Clergy.  
 What justice, when both to the Old Bailey brought !  
 By the gods, I'll enjoy it, though 'tis but in thought !  
 Both are placed at the bar, with all proper decorum,  
 With bunches of fennel, and nosegays before 'em ;  
 Both cover their faces with mobs and all that,  
 But the judge bids them, angrily, take off their hat.  
 When uncover'd, a buzz of inquiry runs round,  
 ' Pray what are their crimes ? ' . . . ' They've been pilfering found '.  
 ' But pray who have they pilfer'd ? ' . . . ' A doctor, I hear '.  
 ' What, yon solemn-faced, odd-looking man that stands near ? '  
 ' The same '. . . . ' What a pity ! how does it surprise one,  
*Two handsomer culprits I never set eyes on !*  
 Then their friends all come round me with cringing and leering,  
 To melt me to pity, and soften my swearing.  
 First Sir Charles advances, with phrases well-strung,  
 ' Consider, dear Doctor, the girls are but young '.  
 ' The younger the worse ', I return him again.  
 ' It shows that their habits are all dyed in grain '.  
 ' But then they're so handsome, one's bosom it grieves '.  
 ' What signifies *handsome*, when people are thieves ? '  
 ' But where is your justice ? their cases are hard '.  
 ' What signifies *justice* ? I want the *reward* '.

' There's the parish of Edmonton offers forty pounds ; there's  
 the parish of St. Leonard, Shoreditch, offers forty pounds ;  
 there's the the parish of Tyburn, from the Hog-in-the-pound  
 to St. Giles's watch-house, offers forty pounds,—I shall have  
 all that if I convict them ! '—

' But consider their case, . . . it may yet be your own !  
 And see how they kneel ! Is your heart made of stone ? '  
 This moves ! . . . so at last I agree to relent,  
 For ten pounds in hand, and ten pounds to be spent.

I challenge you all to answer this : I tell you, you cannot.  
 It cuts deep. But now for the rest of the letter : and next—  
 but I want room—so I believe I shall battle the rest out at  
 Barton some day next week—I don't value you all ?

O. G.



*PART IV*

Philip Francis to Robert Burns

PHILIP FRANCIS—EDMUND BURKE—EDWARD GIBBON—R. B.  
SHERIDAN—ELIZABETH INCHBALD—GILBERT WHITE—  
WILLIAM COWPER—ROBERT BURNS



## SIR PHILIP FRANCIS

1740-1818

SIR PHILIP FRANCIS, the reputed author of *Junius's Letters*, corresponded with Burke while in India, where his quarrel with Hastings made him an eager ally of Burke in the subsequent preliminaries of the famous impeachment in the House of Commons. The following letter was written three years later, when Burke's views on the French Revolution alienated him from the Whigs. Burke's reply will be seen in our next letter.

PHILIP FRANCIS TO THE RIGHT HON. EDMUND BURKE

[*The 'Reflections on the Revolution'*]

February 19, 1790.

MY DEAR MR. BURKE,—

I am sorry you should have had the trouble of sending for the printed paper you lent me yesterday, though I own I cannot much regret even a fault of my own that helps to delay the publication of that paper. I know with certainty that I am the only friend, and many there are, who ventures to contradict or oppose you face to face on subjects of this nature. They either care too little for *you*, or too much for *themselves*, to run the risk of giving you immediate offence, for the sake of any subsequent or remote advantage you might derive from it. But what they withhold from *you*, they communicate very liberally to *me*; because they think, or pretend, that I have some influence over you, which I have not, but, which on the present occasion, I most devoutly wish I had. I am not afraid of exasperating you against me, at any given moment; because I know you will cool again, and place it all to the right account.

It is the proper province, and ought to be the privilege of an inferior to criticise and advise. The best possible critic of the *Iliad* would be, *ipso facto*, and by virtue of that very character, incapable of being the author of it. Standing, as I do, in this relation to you, you would renounce your superiority, if you refused to be advised by me.

Waiving all discussion concerning the substance and general tendency of this printed letter, I must declare my opinion that what I have seen of it is very loosely put together. In point of writing, at least, the manuscript you showed me first, was much less exceptionable. Remember that this is one of the most singular, that it may be the most distinguished, and ought to be one of the most deliberate acts of your life. Your writings have hitherto been the delight and instruction of your own country. You now undertake to correct and instruct another nation, and your appeal, in effect, is to all Europe. Allowing you the liberty to do so in an extreme case, you cannot deny that it ought to be done with special deliberation in the choice of the topics, and with no less care and circumspection in the use you make of them. Have you thoroughly considered whether it be worthy of Mr. Burke,—of a privy-counsellor,—of a man so high and considerable in the House of Commons as you are,—and holding the station you have obtained in the opinion of the world, to enter into a war of pamphlets with Dr. Price? If he answered you, as assuredly he will, (and so will many others,) can you refuse to reply to a person whom you have attacked? If you do, you are defeated in a battle of your own provoking, and driven to fly from ground of your own choosing. If you do not, where is such a contest to lead you, but into a vile and disgraceful, though it were ever so victorious, an altercation? '*Dii meliora*'. But if you will do it, away with all jest, and sneer, and sarcasm; let everything you say be grave, direct, and serious. In a case so interesting as the errors of a great nation, and the calamities of great individuals, and feeling them so deeply as you profess to do, all manner of insinuation is improper, all gibe and nick-name prohibited. In my opinion, all that you say of the queen is pure foppery. If she be a perfect female character, you ought to take your ground upon her virtues. If she be the reverse, it is ridiculous in any but a lover, to place her personal charms in opposition to her crimes. Either way, I know the argument must proceed upon a supposition; for neither have you said anything to establish her moral merits, nor have her accusers formally tried and convicted her of guilt. On this subject, however, you cannot but know that the opinion of the world is not lately, but has been many years, decided.

But in effect, when you assert her claim to protection and respect, on no other topics than those of gallantry, and beauty, and personal accomplishments, you virtually abandon the proof and assertion of her innocence, which you know is the point substantially in question. Pray, sir, how long have you felt yourself so desperately disposed to admire the ladies of Germany ? I despise and abhor, as much as you can do, all personal insult and outrage, even to guilt itself, if I see it, where it ought to be, dejected and helpless ; but it is in vain to expect that I, or any reasonable man, shall regret the sufferings of a Messalina, as I should those of a Mrs. Greive or a Mrs. Burke ; I mean all that is beautiful or virtuous amongst women. Is it nothing but outside ? Have they no moral minds ? Or are you such a determined champion of beauty as to draw your sword in defence of any jade upon earth, provided she be handsome ? Look back, I beseech you, and deliberate a little, before you determine that this is an office that perfectly becomes you. If I stop here, it is not for want of a multitude of objections. The mischief you are going to do yourself, is to my apprehension, palpable. It is visible. It will be audible. I snuff it in the wind. I taste it already. I feel it in every sense ; and so will you hereafter ; when, I vow to God, (a most elegant phrase,) it will be no sort of consolation for me to reflect that I did everything in my power to prevent it. I wish you were at the devil for giving me all this trouble : and so farewell

P. FRANCIS.

## EDMUND BURKE

1729-1797

EDMUND BURKE had sent some early proofs of his *Reflections on the Revolution* to Sir Philip Francis in February, 1790, ten months before it was issued to the public, and his letter in reply to his friend's criticism show how deeply he felt the horrors that had lately been perpetrated in Paris. His tears 'wetted his paper', he says, as he wrote the book. The *Reflections* itself, when published, created an immense stir both at home and abroad ; within a year it had passed through eleven editions. Its effect was to stimulate the resistance to the Revolutionary influence all over Europe, and to raise Burke's position in the political world to a height which it had never attained before. Burke's second letter refers to an



earlier period in his career. In 1759 he became a sort of private secretary to William Gerard Hamilton—‘single speech Hamilton’—who a few years later obtained for him a pension of £300 a year. In 1765 Hamilton endeavoured to bribe Burke into giving him the monopoly of his services, but Burke declined to be bought, and when his autocratic patron broke with him on this account, he threw up the pension which Hamilton had obtained for him, though he could ill afford to do so. A few months later, however, Burke became private secretary to the First Lord of the Treasury, and started his brilliant career in the House of Commons in the beginning of 1766.

THE RIGHT HON. EDMUND BURKE TO PHILIP FRANCIS

[*The Horrors of the Revolution*]

Gerard Street, February 20, 1790.

MY DEAR SIR,—

I sat up rather late at Carlton House, and on my return hither, I found your letter on my table. I have not slept since. You will, therefore, excuse me if you find anything confused, or otherwise expressed than I could wish, in speaking upon a matter which interests you from your regard to me. There are some things in your letter for which I must thank you; there are others which I must answer;—some things bear the mark of friendly admonition; others bear some resemblance to the tone of accusation.

You are the only friend I have who will dare to give me advice; I must, therefore, have something terrible in me, which intimidates all others who know me from giving me the only unequivocal mark of their regard. Whatever this rough and menacing manner may be, I must search myself upon it; and when I discover it, old as I am, I must endeavour to correct it. I flattered myself, however, that you at least would not have thought my other friends justified in withholding from me their services of this kind. You certainly do not always convey to me your opinions with the greatest tenderness and management; and yet I do not recollect, since I first had the pleasure of your acquaintance, that there has been a heat or a coolness of a single day's duration, on my side, during that whole time. I believe your memory cannot present to you an instance of it. I ill deserve friends, if I throw them away on account of the candour and simplicity of their good nature. In particular you know, that you have in some instances, favoured me with your instructions relative

to things I was preparing for the public. If I did not in every instance agree with you, I think you had, on the whole, sufficient proofs of my docility, to make you believe that I received your corrections, not only without offence, but with no small degree of gratitude.

Your remarks upon the first two sheets of my Paris letter, relate to the composition and the matter. The composition, you say, is loose, and I am quite sure of it :—I never intended it should be otherwise. For, purporting to be, what in truth it originally was,—a letter to a friend, I had no idea of digesting it in a systematic order. The style is open to correction, and wants it. My natural style of writing is somewhat careless, and I should be happy in receiving your advice towards making it as little vicious as such a style is capable of being made. The general character and colour of a style, which grows out of the writer's peculiar turn of mind and habit of expressing his thoughts, must be attended to in all corrections. It is not the insertion of a piece of stuff, though of a better kind, which is at all times an improvement.

Your main objections are, however, of a much deeper nature, and go to the political opinions and moral sentiments of the piece, in which I find, though with no sort of surprise, having often talked with you on the subject,—that we differ only in everything. You say, 'the mischief you are going to do yourself, is to my apprehension palpable; I snuff it in the wind, and my taste sickens at it'. This anticipated stench, that turns your stomach at such a distance, must be nauseous indeed. You seem to think I shall incur great (and not wholly undeserved) infamy, by this publication. This makes it a matter of some delicacy to me, to suppress what I have written; for I must admit in my own feelings, and in that of those who have seen the piece, that my sentiments and opinions deserve the infamy with which they are threatened. If they do not, I know nothing more than that I oppose the prejudices and inclinations of many people. This, I was well aware of from the beginning, and it was in order to oppose those inclinations and prejudices, that I proposed to publish my letter. I really am perfectly astonished how you could dream, with my paper in your hand, that I found no other cause than the beauty of the queen of France (now, I suppose, pretty much faded) for disapproving the conduct which has

been held towards her, and for expressing my own particular feelings. I am not to order the natural sympathies of my own heart, and of every honest breast, to wait until all the jokes and all the anecdotes of the coffee-houses of Paris and of the dissenting meeting-houses of London, are seoured of all the slander of those who calumniate persons, that, afterwards, they may murder them with impunity. I know nothing of your story of Messalina. Am I obliged to prove juridically the virtues of all those I shall see suffering every kind of wrong, and contumely, and risk of life, before I endeavour to interest others in their sufferings—and before I endeavour to excite horror against midnight assassins at backstairs, and their more wicked abettors in pulpits? What!—Are not high rank, great splendour of descent, great personal elegance and outward accomplishments, ingredients of moment in forming the interest we take in the misfortunes of men? The minds of those who do not feel thus, are not even systematically right. ‘What’s Heeuba to him, or he to Hecuba, that he should weep for her?’—Why,—because she was Heeuba, the queen of Troy—the wife of Priam,—and suffered, in the close of life, a thousand calamities! I felt too for Heeuba, when I read the fine tragedy of Euripides upon her story; and I never inquired into the anecdotes of the court or city of Troy, before I gave way to the sentiments which the author wished to inspire;—nor do I remember that he ever said one word of her virtue. It is for those who applaud or palliate assassination, regicide, and base insult to women of illustrious place, to prove the crimes (in sufferings) which they allege, to justify their own. But if they have proved fornication on any such woman,—taking the manners of the world, and the manners of France,—I shall never put it in a parallel with assassination!—No: I have no such inverted scale of faults in my heart or my head.

You find it perfectly ridiculous, and unfit for me in particular, to take these things as my ingredients of commiseration. Pray why is it absurd in me to think, that the chivalrous spirit which dictated a veneration for women of condition and of beauty, without any consideration whatever of enjoying them, was the great source of those manners which have been the pride and ornament of Europe for so many ages? And am I not to lament that I have lived to see those manners

extinguished in so shocking a manner, by means of speculation of finance, and the false science of a sordid and degenerate philosophy ? I tell you again,—that the recollection of the manner in which I saw the queen of France, in the year 1774, and the contrast between that brilliancy, splendour, and beauty, with the prostrate homage of a nation to her,—and the abominable scene of 1789, which I was describing,—*did* draw tears from me and wetted my paper. These tears came again into my eyes, almost as often as I looked at the description ;—they may again. You do not believe this fact, nor that these are my real feelings ; but that the whole is affected, or, as you express it, downright foppery. My friend,—I tell you it is truth ; and that it is true, and will be truth, when you and I are no more ; and will exist as long as men with their natural feelings shall exist. I shall say no more on this foppery of mine. Oh ! by the way, you ask me how long I have been an admirer of German ladies ? Always the same. Present me the idea of such massacres about any German lady here, and such attempts to assassinate her, and such a triumphant procession from Windsor to the Old Jewry, and I assure you, I shall be quite as full of natural concern and just indignation.

As to the other points, they deserve serious consideration, and they shall have it. I certainly cannot profit quite so much by your assistance, as if we agreed. In that case, every correction would be forwarding the design. We should work with one common view.

But it is impossible that any man can correct a work according to its true spirit, who is opposed to its object, or can help the expression of what he thinks should not be expressed at all.

I should agree with you about the vileness of the controversy with such miscreants as the ‘ Revolution Society ’, and the ‘ National Assembly ’ ; and I know very well that they, as well as their allies, the Indian delinquents, will darken the air with their arrows. But I do not yet think they have the advantage of reputation. I shall try that point. My dear Sir, you think of nothing but controversies : ‘ I challenge into the field a battle, and retire defeated, etc.’ If their having the last word be a defeat, they most assuredly will defeat me. But I intend no controversy with Dr. Price, or Lord Shelburne, or any other of their set. I mean to set in full view the danger from their

wicked principles and their black hearts. I intend to state the true principles of our constitution in church and state, upon grounds opposite to theirs. If any one be the better for the example made of them, and for this exposition, well and good. I mean to do my best to expose them to the hatred, ridicule, and contempt of the whole world ; as I always shall expose such calumniators, hypocrites, sowers of sedition, and approvers of murder and all its triumphs. When I have done that, they may have the field to themselves ; and I care very little how they triumph over me, since I hope they will not be able to draw me at their heels, and carry my head in triumph on their poles.

I have been interrupted, and have said enough. Adieu ! believe me always sensible of your friendship ; though it is impossible that a greater difference can exist on earth than, unfortunately for me, there is on those subjects, between your sentiments and mine.

EDM. BURKE.

EDMUND BURKE TO THE RIGHT HON. WILLIAM GERARD

[*His relations with 'Single-speech Hamilton'*]

February, 1765.

DEAR SIR,—

Your letter, which I received about four o'clock yesterday, seemed not to have been written with an intention of being answered. However, on considering the matter this morning, I thought it respectful to you, and, in a manner, necessary to myself, to say something to those heavy charges which you have made against me in our last conversations ; and which, with a polite acrimony in the expression, you have thought proper to repeat in your letter.

I should, indeed, be extremely unhappy, if I felt any consciousness at all of that unkindness, of which you have so lively a sense. In the six years during which I have had the honour of being connected with you, I do not know that I have given you one just occasion of complaint ; and if all things have not succeeded every way to your wishes, I may appeal to your own equity and candour whether the failure was owing to any thing wrong in my advice, or inattention



in my conduct ; I can honestly affirm, and your heart will not contradict me, that in all cases I preferred your interest to my own. I made you, and not myself, the first object in every deliberation. I studied your advancement, your fortune, and your reputation in every thing, with zeal and earnestness ; and sometimes with an anxiety, which has made many of my hours miserable. Nobody could be more ready than I was to acknowledge the obligations I had to you ; and if I thought, as in some instances I did, and do still think, I had cause of dissatisfaction, I never expressed it to others, or made yourself uneasy about them. I acted in every respect, with a fidelity which, I trust, cannot be impeached. If there be any part of my conduct in life, upon which I can look with entire satisfaction, it is my behaviour with regard to you.

So far as to the past : with regard to the present, what is that unkindness and misbehaviour of which you complain ? My heart is full of friendship to you ; and is there a single point which the best and most intelligent men have fixed, as a proof of friendship and gratitude, in which I have been deficient, or in which I threaten a failure ? What you blame is only this, that I will not consent to bind myself to you, for no less a term than my whole life, in a sort of domestic situation, for a consideration to be taken out of your private fortune ; that is, to circumscribe my hopes, to give up even the possibility of liberty, and absolutely to annihilate myself for ever. I beseech you, is the demand, or the refusal, the act of unkindness ? If ever such a test of friendship was proposed, in any instance, to any man living, I admit that my conduct has been unkind ; and, if you please, ungrateful. If I had accepted your kind offers, and afterwards refused to abide by the condition you annex to them, you then would have had a good right to tax me with unkindness. But what have I done, at the end of a very long, however I confess unprofitable, service, but to prefer my own liberty to the offers of advantage you are pleased to make me ; and, at the same time, to tender you the continuance of those services (upon which partiality alone induces you to set any value) in the most disinterested manner, as far as I can do it, consistent with that freedom to which, for a long time, I have determined to sacrifice every consideration ; and which I never gave you the slightest assurance that I had any intention to

surrender ; whatever my private resolves may have been in case an event had happened, which (so far as concerns myself) I rejoice never to have taken place ? You are kind enough to say, that you looked upon my friendship as valuable ; but hint that it has not been lasting. I really do not know when, and by what act, I broke it off. I should be wicked and mad to do it, unless you call that a lasting friendship, which all mankind would call a settled servitude, and which no ingenuity can distinguish from it. Once more put yourself in my situation, and judge for me. If I have spoken too strongly, you will be so good to pardon a man on his defence, in one of the nicest questions to a mind that has any feeling. I meant to speak fully, not to offend. I am not used to defend my conduct ; nor do I intend, for the future, to fall into so bad a habit. I have been warmed to it by the imputation you threw on me ; as if I deserted you on account solely of your want of success. On this, however, I shall say nothing, because perhaps I should grow still warmer ; and I would not drop one loose word which might mark the least disrespect, and hurt a friendship which has been, and I flatter myself will be, a satisfaction and an honour to me. I beseech you that you will judge of me with a little impartiality and temper. I hope I have said nothing in our last interview which could urge you to the passion you speak of. If anything fell which was strong in the expression, I believe it was from you, and not from me, and it is right that I should hear more than I then heard. I said nothing, but what I took the liberty of mentioning to you a year ago, in Dublin : I gave you no reason to think I had made any change in my resolution. We, notwithstanding, have ever since, until within these few days proceeded as usual. Permit me to do so again. No man living can have a higher veneration than I have, for your abilities ; or can set a higher value on your friendship, as a great private satisfaction, and a very honourable distinction. I am much obliged to you for the favour you intend me, in sending to me in three or four days (if you do not send sooner) ; when you have had time to consider this matter coolly. I will again call at your door, and hope to be admitted ; I beg it, and entreat it. At the same time do justice to the single motive which I have for desiring this favour, and desiring it in this manner. I have not wrote all this tiresome matter,

in hopes of bringing on an altercation in writing, which you are so good to me as to decline personally; and which, in either way, I am most solicitous to shun. What I say is, on reviewing it, little more than I have laid before you in another manner. It certainly requires no answer. I ask pardon for my prolixity, which my anxiety to stand well in your opinion has caused.

I am, with great truth,

Your most affectionate and most obliged humble servant,

EDM. BURKE.

### EDWARD GIBBON

1737-1794

THE sudden death of his old friend Lady Sheffield was but one of a series of dark clouds which overshadowed the last years of Gibbon's life. Death had but recently removed other favourite friends, notably Deyverduns with whom he had lived at Lausanne while writing the last volumes of the *Decline and Fall*; and he was troubled both with gout and burdensome corpulency. In 1791 Lord Sheffield and his family spent some months with him at Lausanne, and he was about to return the visit when the overwhelming news came of Lady Sheffield's death. Gibbon was on his way to console his friend when the following letter reached its destination, and he remained at Sheffield Place until the following October. He died only three months later. Dropsy had developed after his arrival in England, and operations brought only temporary relief, though on January 15, he had said that he thought himself a 'good life for ten, twelve, or perhaps twenty years'. That very night his fatal illness seized him, and he died during the following afternoon.

#### EDWARD GIBBON TO LORD SHEFFIELD

[*On the death of Lady Sheffield*]

Lausanne, *April 27, 1793.*

MY DEAREST FRIEND,—

For such you most truly are, nor does there exist a person who obtains, or shall ever obtain, a superior place in my esteem and affection. After too long a silence I was sitting down to write, when, only yesterday morning (such is now the irregular slowness of the English post), I was suddenly struck, indeed struck to the heart, by the fatal intelligence from Sir Henry Clinton and M. de Lally. Alas! what is life, and what are our hopes and projects! When I embraced her at your departure

from Lausanne, could I imagine that it was for the last time ? When I postponed to another summer my journey to England, could I apprehend that I never, never should see her again ? I always hoped that she would spin her feeble thread to a long duration, and that her delicate frame would survive (as is often the case) many constitutions of a stouter appearance. In four days ! in your absence, in that of her children ! But she is now at rest ; and if there be a future life, her mild virtues have surely entitled her to the reward of pure and perfect felicity. It is for you that I feel, and I can judge of your sentiments by comparing them with my own. I have lost, it is true, an amiable and affectionate friend, whom I had known and loved above three-and-twenty years, and whom I often styled by the endearing name of sister. But you are deprived of the companion of your life, the wife of your choice, and the mother of your children ; poor children ! the liveliness of Maria, and the softness of Louisa, render them almost equally the objects of my tenderest compassion. I do not wish to aggravate your grief ; but, in the sincerity of friendship, I cannot hold a different language. I know the impotence of reason, and I much fear that the strength of your character will serve to make a sharper and more lasting impression.

The only consolation in these melancholy trials to which human life is exposed, the only one at least in which I have any confidence, is the presence of a real friend ; and of that, as far as it depends on myself, you shall not be destitute. I regret the few days that must be lost in some necessary preparations ; but I trust that to-morrow se'nnight (May the fifth) I shall be able to set forwards on my journey to England ; and when this letter reaches you, I shall be considerably advanced on my way. As it is yet prudent to keep at a respectful distance from the banks of the French Rhine, I shall incline a little to the right, and proceed by Schaffousen and Stutgard to Frankfurt and Cologne : the Austrian Netherlands are now open and safe, and I am sure of being able at least to pass from Ostend to Dover ; whence, without passing through London, I shall pursue the direct road to Sheffield Place.

Unless I should meet with some unforeseen accidents and delays, I hope, before the end of the month to share your solitude, and sympathize with your grief. All the difficulties of the journey which my indolence had probably magnified,

have now disappeared before a stronger passion ; and you will not be sorry to hear, that, as far as Frankfort to Cologne, I shall enjoy the advantage of the Society, the conversation, the German language, and the active assistance of Severy. His attachment to me is the sole motive which prompts him to undertake this troublesome journey ; and as soon as he has seen me over the roughest ground he will immediately return to Lausanne. The poor young man loved Lady S. as a mother, and the whole family is deeply affected by an event which reminds them too painfully of their own misfortune. Adieu. I could write volumes, and shall therefore break off abruptly. I shall write on the road, and hope to find a few lines *à poste restante* at Frankfort and Brussels. Adieu ; ever yours.

## RICHARD BRINSLEY SHERIDAN

1751-1816

KEMBLE had been Sheridan's manager at Drury Lane since 1788—not long after Sheridan's oratorical triumph in the House of Commons on the occasion of the impeachment of Warren Hastings—but Sheridan's happy-go-lucky shiftlessness forced him to leave the theatre in 1802. The following letter, which is curiously characteristic of the writer, was apparently written in reply to some remonstrance from Kemble. In 1804, as the second letter shows, Sheridan was appointed Receiver of the Duchy of Cornwall by the Prince Regent, whose devoted adherent and confidential adviser he had been for many years ; but he received no pension. He was always a bad manager of his own affairs, and the destruction of Drury Lane Theatre by fire in 1809 put the finishing touch to his financial embarrassments. These, with the crowning addition of brain disease, spoiled the last years of the old dramatist's life. Death found him with the bailiffs in possession of his house.

R. B. SHERIDAN TO JOHN P. KEMBLE

[*The Management of Drury Lane*]

DEAR KEMBLE,—

If I had not a real good opinion of your principles and intentions upon all subjects, and a very bad opinion of your nerves and philosophy upon some, I should take very ill indeed, the letter I received from you this evening.

That the management of the theatre is a situation capable



of becoming troublesome is information which I do not want, and a discovery which I thought you had made long ago.

I should be very sorry to write to you gravely on your offer, because I must consider it as a nervous flight, which it would be as unfriendly in me to notice seriously as it would be in you seriously to have made it.

What I *am* most serious in is a determination that, while the theatre is indebted, and others, for it and for me, are so involved and pressed as they are, I will exert myself, and give every attention and judgment in my power to the establishment of its interests. In you I hoped, and do hope, to find an assistant, on principles of liberal and friendly confidence,—I mean confidence that should be above touchiness and reserve, and that should trust to me to estimate the value of that assistance.

If there is anything amiss in your mind not arising from the *troublesomeness* of your situation, it is childish and unmanly not to disclose it to me. The frankness with which I have always dealt towards you entitles me to expect that you should have done so.

But I have no reason to believe this to be the case; and, attributing your letter to a disorder which I know ought not to be indulged, I prescribe that you shall keep your appointment at the Piazza Coffee-house, to-morrow at five, and, taking four bottles of claret instead of three, to which in sound health you might stint yourself, forget that you ever wrote the letter, as I shall that I ever received it.

R. B. SHERIDAN.

R. B. SHERIDAN TO HENRY ADDINGTON, AFTERWARDS  
VISCOUNT SIDMOUTH

[*Sheridan's relations with the Prince Regent*]

George Street, *Tuesday Evening*, 1804.

DEAR SIR,—

Convinced as I am of the sincerity of your good will towards me, I do not regard it as an impertinent intrusion to inform you that the Prince has, in the most gracious manner, and wholly unsolicited, been pleased to appoint me to the late Lord Elliot's situation in the Duchy of Cornwall. I feel a

desire to communicate this to you myself, because I feel a confidence that you will be glad of it. It has been my pride and pleasure to have exerted my humble efforts to serve the Prince without ever accepting the slightest obligation from him; but in the present case, and under the present circumstances, I think it would have been really false pride and apparently mischievous affectation to have declined this mark of His Royal Highness' confidence and favour. I will not disguise that, at this peculiar crisis, I am greatly gratified at this event. Had it been the result of a mean and subservient devotion to the Prince's every wish and object, I could neither have respected the gift, the giver, or myself; but when I consider how recently it was my misfortune to find myself compelled, with a sense of duty, stronger than my attachment to him, wholly to risk the situation I held in his confidence and favour, and that upon a subject <sup>1</sup> on which his feelings were so eager and irritable, I cannot but regard the increased attention with which he has since honoured me, as a most gratifying demonstration that he has clearness of judgment and firmness of spirit to distinguish the real friends to his true glory and interests from the mean and mercenary sycophants, who fear and abhor that such friends should be near him. It is satisfactory to me, also, that this appointment gives me the title and opportunity of seeing the Prince, on trying occasions, openly and in the face of day, and puts aside the mask of mystery and concealment. I trust I need not add, that whatever small portion of fair influence I may at any time possess with the Prince, it shall be uniformly exerted to promote those feelings of duty and affection towards their Majesties, which, though seemingly interrupted by adverse circumstances, I am sure are in his heart warm and unalterable—and, as far as I may presume, that general concord throughout his illustrious family, which must be looked to by every honest subject, as an essential part of the public strength at this momentous period. I have the honour to be, with great respect and esteem,

Your obedient Servant,

R. B. SHERIDAN.

Right Hon. Henry Addington.

<sup>1</sup> The offer made by the Prince of his personal services in 1803, when Sheridan, as Moore says, 'coincided with the views of Mr. Addington somewhat more than was agreeable to His Royal Highness'.

R. B. SHERIDAN TO SAMUEL WHITBREAD <sup>1</sup>[*Bitter accusations from prison*]

Took's Court, Cursitor Street, 1815.

I HAVE done everything in my power with the solicitors, White and Founes, to obtain my release, by substituting a better security for them than their detaining me—but in vain.

Whitbread, putting all false professions of friendship and feeling out of the question, you have no right to keep me here—for it is in truth *your* act—if you had not forcibly withheld from me the *twelve thousand pounds*, in consequence of a threatening letter from a miserable swindler, whose claim you in particular knew to *be a lie*, I should at least have been out of the reach of *this* state of miserable insult—for that, and that only, lost me my seat in Parliament. And I assert that you cannot find a lawyer in the land, that is not either a natural born fool or a corrupted scoundrel, who will not declare that your conduct in this respect was neither warrantable or legal—but let that pass *for the present*.

Independently of the £1,000 ignorantly withheld from me on the day of considering my last claim, I require of you to answer the draft I send herewith on the part of the Committee, pledging myself to prove to them on the first day I can *personally* meet them, that there are still thousands and thousands due to me, both legally and equitably, from the Theatre. My word ought to be taken on this subject; and you may produce to them this document, if one among them could think that, under all the circumstances, your conduct required a justification. O God! with what mad confidence have I trusted *your word*—I ask *justice* from you, and *no boon*. I enclosed you yesterday three different securities, which, had you been disposed to have acted even as a private friend, would have made it *certain* that

<sup>1</sup> Written from a sponging-house after Sheridan's arrest for debt. 'The abode', as Moore writes in his biography, 'formed a sad contrast to those princely halls, of which he had so lately been the most brilliant and favoured guest, and which were possibly, at that very moment, lighted up and crowded with gay company, unmindful of him within those prison walls.' Samuel Whitbread, who was an intimate friend of Fox, and had been leader of the Opposition under Pitt, presided over the committee for rebuilding Drury Lane Theatre after the fire of 1809. The committee's action in giving Sheridan shares for part of the amount due to him, and keeping back £12,000 in cash, prevented his return for Parliament and led to his arrest for debt. He remained in the Took's Court sponging-house until Whitbread produced the necessary sum for his release. Two years later Whitbread died by his own hand, and it was then discovered that brain disease accounted for many actions which had previously been difficult to explain.

you might have done so *without the smallest risk*. These you discreetly offered to put into the fire, when you found the object of your humane visit satisfied by seeing me safe in prison.

I shall only add, that, I think, if I know myself, had our lots been reversed, and I had seen you in my situation, and had left Lady E. in that of my wife, I would have risked £600 rather than have left you so—although I had been in no way accessory in bringing you into that condition.

R. B. SHERIDAN.

R. B. SHERIDAN TO SAMUEL ROGERS

[*'Undone and broken-hearted'*]

Saville Row, May 15, 1816.

I FIND things settled so that £150 will remove all difficulty. I am absolutely undone and broken-hearted. I shall negotiate for the Plays successfully in the course of a week, when all shall be returned. I have desired Fairbrother to get back the guarantee for thirty.

They are going to put the carpets out of the window, and break into Mrs. S.'s room and *take me*—for God's sake let me see you.<sup>1</sup>

R. B. S.

ELIZABETH INCHBALD

1753-1821

ELIZABETH INCHBALD made her name as a dramatist before she began writing novels, but to-day her fame rests mainly on her two romances *A Simple Story* (1791) and *Nature and Art* (1796), which have often been reprinted. She was the daughter of John Simpson, a farmer of Standingfield, Bury St. Edmunds, and the date of one of her letters, now reprinted, shows that she ran away from home when she was little more than seventeen. Many stories are told of her strange adventures in London in search of a theatrical engagement. She found a fairly happy issue out of her indiscretions a few months later by marrying Joseph Inchbald, an actor and painter, whose proposal she had declined in the letter written to him before she left Standingfield. Elizabeth and her husband acted together for some years, but he died suddenly in 1779,

<sup>1</sup> Early on the following morning—in time to prevent the arrest—Thomas Moore handed Sheridan a draft from Rogers for the £150 mentioned—'not the first of the same amount', says Moore, 'that my liberal friend, Mr. Rogers, had advanced for Sheridan'. Lord Holland afterwards insisted upon paying half of this last amount. Sheridan died a few weeks later.

and ten years later she retired from the stage to devote herself to literature. She wrote and adapted nineteen plays and edited the well-known *Inchbald's British Theatre* (25 vols.) and the *Modern Theatre* (10 vols.)

ELIZABETH SIMPSON (AFTERWARDS MRS INCHBALD) TO JOSEPH  
INCHBALD

*[A refusal which ended in marriage]*

Standingfield, 1771.

You see, Mr Inchbald, I have complied with your request, by answering your letter immediately. Indeed, I was not a little disturbed at first sight of it, with wondering what new correspondent I had got ; for as so many things of consequence had occurred since I saw the hand, it had really slipt my remembrance. You inquire whether the pleasures of Bury fair are not worn off ? I must confess they are not ; for although, like all others, they were intermixed with pains which at the time of enjoyment robbed 'em of the power of bestowing happiness, yet the recollection of 'em can (bestow it) : 'tis sweet, and not to be rivalled by any other, unless the delights of London ; but they for some time have daily grown the weakest, which can easily be accounted for ; for as that impression was first made, 'tis natural it will be first erased. I find you have seen my thoughts on marriage ; but, as you desire it, I will repeat them. In spite of your eloquent pen, matrimony still appears to me with less charms than terrors : the bliss arising from it, I doubt not, is superior to any other—but best not to be ventured for (in my opinion) till some little time have proved the emptiness of all other ; which it seldom fails to do. But to enter into marriage with the least reluctance, as fearing you are going to sacrifice part of your time, must be greatly imprudent ; fewer unhappy matches I think would be occasioned, if fewer persons were guilty of this indiscretion,—an indiscretion that shocks me, and which I hope Heaven will ever preserve me from : as must be your wish, if the regard that you have professed for me be really mine, which I am not wholly undeserving of : for, as much as the strongest friendship can allow,

I am, yours,

E. SIMPSON.



## ELIZABETH INCHBALD TO HER MOTHER

[Farewell letter before her flight to London]

Standingfield, April 10, 1772.

By the time you receive this I shall have left Standingfield, and perhaps for ever. You are surprised, but be not uneasy: believe the step I have taken, however indiscreet, is no ways criminal; unless I sin by not acquainting you with it, which was impossible for me to do, though strongly pressed by the desire of giving you a personal farewell. I now endure every pang—one not lost to all feeling must—on thus quitting the tenderest and best of parents, I would say most beloved too, but cannot *prove* my affection;—yet time may;—to *that* I must submit my hope of regaining your regard.

The censure of the world I despise; as the most worthy incur the reproaches of *that*. Should I ever think you wish to hear from me, I will write.

ELIZABETH INCHBALD TO THE REV. JAMES PLUMPTRE <sup>1</sup>

[On the abuse of the drama]

1809.

SIR,—

I should have acknowledged the favour of your letter much sooner, but that I have been ambitious to add a few observations, in compliance with your request, to that vast catalogue of facts which you have so charitably produced in defence of the drama. It appears to me, however, that you have left so little to be said in addition to your arguments, that I almost despair of a future volume from you; and in all my endeavours to aid the cause, I have no more than the following remarks to offer.

My first is,—that the disgrace imputed to the actor's profession seems to have been a kind of preservative against every *other* disgrace—at least against that worst of ignominies which attaches to every offence punishable by law. From murder down to forgery or petty larceny—from high treason down to sedition or even disaffection to the royal cause—all English actors are allowed to have been free. The misdeeds

<sup>1</sup> The Rev. James Plumptre, was himself a dramatist, as well as a divine. He regarded the stage as a great moral educator, and strove to improve its tone.

of actors are at least *refined* ; not of that atrocious nature into which men of all classes, they alone excepted, seem at some time or other to have fallen.

My second observation is,—the enemies of the Stage make no reference to the age in which certain immoral and licentious plays were written ; but condemn those plays as if they were written in the present day, and performed with all those vile scenes which are now omitted in representation, and which were neither sinful nor shameful at the time of their production ; for they merely spoke the language and gave the manners of the times. Delicacy had not, at that period, augmented the number of our enjoyments and transgressions, by imposing its present laws of refinement. A quotation from Mr. Warton will best explain the meaning I would convey in this observation. After having noticed some very indecorous scene in an ancient drama, where the patriarch Noah and his wife are the principal personages, the critic observes : ‘ Our ancestors intended no sort of impiety by these monstrous unnatural mixtures. Neither the writers nor the spectators saw their impropriety. They had no just idea of decorum, consequently but little sense of the ridiculous : what appears to us to be the highest burlesque upon these characters, made no sort of impression in those days ’.

Having brought my two observations into a smaller space than I apprehended I should do, permit me now to say, in reply to that part of your letter in which you distinguish between the effects of *seriousness* and *levity* in the utterance of language dangerous to the hearer,—that I can by no means consider *levity* as possessing any peculiar allurements to the passion commonly called Love.

For, as far as every serious description must impress our hearts and our understanding more deeply than a jocular one, so far I conceive there may be danger in those very warnings, however gravely delivered, which the fall of David and other holy persons in the Old Testament are meant to impart. The awful consequences which followed guilt in the unlawful loves of the Jews, will no doubt alarm ; but they will also awaken the mind to the contemplation of those crimes so dearly purchased ; and the magnitude of the temptation can in no way be so forcibly described, as by the magnitude of the punishment, which was sure to overtake the unhappy sinner, and

yet was so often braved by the very favourites of Heaven.

But writings that are familiar to us lose very often (as other familiar things do) their natural effect ; for I sincerely believe that many an *actor* would blush to read *all* the adventures of the Jewish people before an actress whom he esteemed, as much as an *ecclesiastic* would be ashamed to recite one of our *most* licentious comedies before the woman whom he wished to make his wife. My veneration for the Sacred History is in no shape diminished by this opinion ; but my respect for the cavillers at plays is wholly overcome or destroyed by it.

There is a quotation in your work wherein Gisborne will not admit on the stage even *allusions* offensive to modesty. This would seem highly proper, and every one would agree in such taste for purity did not the comparison of the ‘ beam and the mote ’ force itself upon recollection, and give rise to the suspicion, that he conceives there is a prerogative in indelicacy which only belongs to the Christian *Church*.

Dear Sir, your most obliged humble servant,  
E. INCHBALD.

PS.—If I were asked by an illiterate foreigner to explain to him the exact meaning of our word *delicacy*, I would conclude my definition by saying :—‘ And this very *Delicacy* is at present all the fashion ; and the most beautiful and becoming fashion it is that ever was followed. The grave and the good are loudest in its praise ; but no one loves and admires it so much as the *Libertine*. It is the lure to his pleasures and heightens all their gratifications. It conceals, as with a veil, all the vices of the artful wanton, and supplies her with bonds to secure the paramour whom delicacy has ensnared ’.

ELIZABETH INCHBALD TO MRS. PHILLIPS

[*An anecdote of Madame de Staël*]

August 26, 1813.

I WILL now mention the calamity of a neighbour, by many degrees the first female writer in the world, as she is called by the Edinburgh Reviewers. Madame de Staël asked a lady of my acquaintance to introduce her to me. The lady was our mutual acquaintance, of course, and so far my friend,

as to conceal my place of abode<sup>1</sup>; yet she menaced me with a visit from the Baroness of Holstein, if I would not consent to meet her at a third house. After much persuasion, I did so. I admired Madame de Staël much; she talked to me the whole time; so did Miss Edgeworth, whenever I met her in company. These authoresses suppose me dead, and seem to pay a tribute to my memory; but, with Madame de Staël, it seemed no passing compliment: she was inquisitive as well as attentive, and entreated me to explain to her the motive why I shunned society. 'Because', I replied, 'I dread the loneliness that will follow'. 'What, will you feel your solitude more, when you return from this company, than you did before you came hither?' 'Yes.' 'I should think it would elevate your spirits: why will you feel your loneliness more?' 'Because I have no one to tell that I have seen *you*;—no one to describe your person to;—no one to whom I can repeat the many encomiums you have passed on my *Simple Story*;—no one to enjoy any of your praises but myself.' 'Ah! ah! you have no children'; and she turned to an elegant young woman, her daughter, with pathetic tenderness. She then so forcibly depicted a mother's joys, that she sent me home more melancholy at the comparison of our situations in life, than could have arisen from the consequences of riches or poverty. I called, by appointment, at her house, two days after: I was told she was *ill*. The next morning my paper explained her illness. You have seen the death of her son in the papers: he was one of Bernadotte's aides-de-camp,—a most beautiful young man that ever was seen, only nineteen,—a duel with sabres, and the first stroke literally cut off his *head*! Necker's grandson.

## GILBERT WHITE

1720–1793

GILBERT WHITE, 'venerable vegetable' though he calls himself, was not altogether absorbed in Selborne and its doings, as one of the following

<sup>1</sup> Mrs. Inchbald became very devout in her later years, and was living the life of a recluse when Madame de Staël, exiled by Napoleon, came to England in 1813, after her triumphant progress through the northern capitals of Europe. The 'mutual acquaintance' referred to as having introduced her to Mrs. Inchbald was Mrs. Amelia Opie, the novelist and poet, who was intimate with many of the leaders of the literary society of her day. Mrs. Phillips, to whom this letter was written, was the wife of the surgeon to the King—George III—and was another devoted friend of Mrs. Inchbald.

letters will show. His kinsman, Mr. Rashleigh Holt-White, whose *Life and Letters of Gilbert White* appeared through Mr. Murray in 1901, writes that 'of all criticisms of Gilbert White's book, the remark that "he was more concerned with the course of events in a martin's nest than with the crash of empires" has always seemed very inapplicable'. Few people, surely, would expect to find national or international events chronicled in what was professedly a natural history of a parish. 'The philosopher of Selborne' seems to have feared that the public would 'laugh at an old country parson's book', but, happily, he was not long left in doubt as to its success. He only lived some three years after its publication, which took place in 1789, but before his death his book had not only established itself firmly at home, but a translation had appeared in Berlin. To-day, its popularity is greater than ever. The first and second of the following letters are reprinted from the *Life and Letters of Gilbert White*, by the kind permission of Mr. Murray.

GILBERT WHITE TO ARCHDEACON CHURTON <sup>1</sup>

[His '*Natural History of Selborne*' finished]

Selborne, August 14, 1788.

DEAR SIR,—

You must not expect that I, who am but a venerable vegetable, remaining like a cabbage on the same spot for months together, should be able to furnish out a letter full of entertaining incidents like you, who are flying from diocese to diocese, and from cathedral to cathedral. I thank you for your information respecting Bourn Well-head, and might have made some use of it, had not my last corrections, and *errata* been sent to London the very day that I received your letter. The fate of my work is now determined; and as the tree is fallen, it must lie. My brother and nephew have spared no expense about it, and particularly on the engravings, which have cost a considerable sum. This book will, as you suppose, not be pub<sup>d</sup> now till the autumn, when the town begins to fill. In the interim the author will be in no small squeeze; and will feel like a schoolboy who has done some mischief, and does not know whether he is to be flogged for it or not. As you were accessory to making me an author, you must defend me if I am attacked unreasonably. 'Orna me', I think Tully says somewhere. As to your own work you will, I find, spare no pains about it; so that not long hence I expect to see you a very distinguished Biographer. As to my beds they have all

<sup>1</sup> Archdeacon of St. David's. Author of lives of the founders of Brasenose College, of Dean Nowell, and others.



been full some time ; and will be more than full next week ; however, by the end of the month or the beginning of next, there will be room for you ; so finish your IV. excursions, and then come and stay a good while. . . . A Mr. Headley<sup>1</sup> of Trin. Coll. has pub<sup>d</sup> a collection of ancient poetry in two volumes, and seems to intimate that he may another day undertake more of the same kind. As I can direct him to a book which probably he has never seen ; and as that book was written in the time of Queen Elizabeth and may contain words and expressions explanatory of passages in Shakespeare, I have thought of writing to his friend, Mr. Benwell, of Caversham, and of recommending that old poetry to their consideration. I remain,

Your obliged and

Humble servant,

GIL. WHITE.

GILBERT WHITE TO ARCHDEACON CHURTON

[*His interest in the French Revolution*]

Selborne, December 4, 1789.

DEAR SIR,—

Though Oxford appears to my timid apprehensions to recede every year farther and farther from Selborne ; yet to you who are in the prime and vigour of life, Selborne ought not to be one inch more removed from Oxford than when I first knew you ; therefore we shall depend much on seeing you at Christmas as usual. I have much to say to you : for surely we live in a most eventful and portentous period ; when wars, devastations, revolutions and insurrections crowd so fast upon the back of one another that a thinking mind cannot but suppose that providence has some great work in hand ! But of all these strange commotions, the sudden overthrow of the French despotic monarchy is the most wonderful—a fabrick which has been now erecting for near two centuries, and whose foundations were laid so deep, that we would have supposed it might have lasted for ages to come ; yet it is gone, as it were, in a moment !!

These troubles naturally put me in mind of Dr. Chandler,<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Henry Headley, poet and critic. Published *Select Beauties of Ancient English Poetry, with Remarks*, in 1787.

<sup>2</sup> Dr. Richard Chandler, classical antiquary and traveller (1738–1810).

who, the last time we heard of him, was in Brussels, in a most uncomfortable situation, having his baggage seized and his papers tumbled about, for which he was in great concern. A man of his resolution and address, and who, by his long voyage to the Levant, has, as it were, been inured to dangers and difficulties, might by himself make his way through all the misrule and uproar that prevail in the province of the Netherlands : but the ease is very different where a man has a wife and infant to protect and take care of ; and therefore I heartily wish that he and his family were safe at home. . . . You are very kind in taking the trouble, amidst all your busy hours, of enlarging my index : when I had carried it to its present bulk, I desisted out of pure modesty, thinking I should swell the volume unreasonably ; but to say the truth when I showed it to my brother he expressed a wish that it had been fuller, it was then too late. . . .

Yr. obliged and humble servant,

GIL. WHITE.

GILBERT WHITE TO HECKY MULSO <sup>1</sup>

[*The autobiography of his pet Tortoise*]

Selborne, August 31, 1784.

MOST RESPECTABLE LADY,—

Your letter gave me great satisfaction, being the first that ever I was honoured with. It is my wish to answer you in your own way ; but I never could make a verse in my life, so you must be contented with plain prose. Having seen but little of this great world, conversed but little and read less, I feel myself much at a loss how to entertain so intelligent a correspondent. Unless you will let me write about myself, my answer will be very short indeed.

Know, then, that I am an American, and was born in the year 1734 in the Province of Virginia, in the midst of a savanna that lay between a large tobacco plantation and a creek of the sea. Here I spent my youthful days among my relations with much satisfaction, and saw around me many venerable kinsmen, who had attained to great ages, without any interruption from

<sup>1</sup> Hecky (Hester) Mulso was a niece of Mrs. Chapone, who, as Miss Mulso, had been Gilbert White's first love, though her marriage did not sever their friendship. This amusing letter was written in reply to some verses which her niece had addressed to his pet tortoise, 'Timothy'.

distempers. Longevity is so general among our species that a funeral is quite a strange occurrence. I can just remember the death of my great-great-grandfather, who departed this life in the 160th year of his age. Happy should I have been in the enjoyment of my native climate, and the society of my friends, had not a sea-boy, who was wandering about to see what he could pick up, surprised me as I was sunning myself under a bush ; and whipping me into his wallet, carried me aboard his ship. The circumstances of our voyage are not worthy a recital ; I only remember that the rippling of the water against the sides of our vessel as we sailed along was a very lulling and composing sound, which served to soothe my slumbers as I lay in the hold. We had a short voyage, and came to anchor on the coast of England in the harbour of Chicester. In that city my kidnapper sold me for half-a-crown to a country gentleman, who came up to attend an election. I was immediately packed in a hand-basket, and carried, slung by the servant's side, to their place of abode. As they rode very hard for forty miles, and I had never been on horseback before, I found myself somewhat giddy from my airy jaunt. My purchaser, who was a great humorist, after showing me to some of his neighbours, and giving me the name of Timothy, took little further notice of me ; so I fell under the care of his lady, a benevolent woman, whose humane attention extended to the meanest of her retainers.

With this gentlewoman I remained almost forty years, living in a little walled-in court in the front of her house, and enjoying much quiet, and as much satisfaction as I could expect without society. At last this good old lady died in a very advanced old age, such as a tortoise would call a good old age ; and I then became the property of her nephew. This man, my present master, dug me out of my winter retreat, and packing me in a deal box, jumbled me eighty miles in post-chaises to my present place of abode. I was sore shaken by this expedition, which was the worst journey I ever experienced. In my present situation I enjoy many advantages—such as the range of an extensive garden, affording a variety of sun and shade, and abounding in lettuces, poppies, kidney beans, and many other salubrious and delectable herbs and plants, and especially with a great choice of delicate gooseberries ! But still at times I miss my good old mistress, whose grave and

regular deportment suited best with my disposition. For you must know that my master is what they call a naturalist, and much visited by people of that turn, who often put him on whimsical experiments, such as feeling my pulse, putting me in a tub of water to try if I can swim, etc., and twice in the year I am carried to the grocer's to be weighed, that it may be seen how much I am wasted during the months of my abstinence, and how much I gain by feasting in the summer. Upon these occasions I am placed in the scale on my back, where I sprawl about to the great diversion of the shopkeeper's children. These matters displease me ; but there is another that much hurts my pride ; I mean that contempt shown for my understanding which these lords of the creation are very apt to discover, thinking that nobody knows anything but themselves. I heard my master say that he expected that I should some day tumble down the ha-ha ; whereas I would have him to know that I can discern a precipice from plain ground as well as himself. Sometimes my master repeats with much seeming triumph the following lines, which occasion a loud laugh :

Timotheus placed on high  
Amidst the tuneful choir,  
With flying fingers touched the lyre.

For my part I see no wit in the application, nor know whence the verses are quoted, perhaps from some prophet of his own, who, if he penned them for the sake of ridiculing tortoises, bestowed his pains, I think, to poor purposes. These are some of my grievances ; but they sit very light on me in comparison of what remains behind. Know, then, tender-hearted lady, that my greatest misfortune, and what I have never divulged to any one before, is the want of society of my own kind. This reflection is always uppermost in my own mind, but comes upon me with irresistible force every spring. It was in the month of May last, that I resolved to elope from my place of confinement, for my fancy had represented to me that probably many agreeable tortoises of both sexes might inhabit the heights of Baker's Hill, or the extensive plains of the neighbouring meadow, both of which I could discern from the terrace. One sunny morning, therefore, I watched my opportunity, found the wicket open, eluded the vigilance of Thomas Hoar, and escaped into the saint-foin, which began to be in bloom, and

thence into the beans. I was missing eight days, wandering in this wilderness of sweets, and exploring the meadow at times. But my pains were all to no purpose ; I could find no society such as I wished and sought for. I began to grow hungry, and to wish myself at home. I therefore came forth in sight, and surrendered myself up to Thomas, who had been inconsolable in my absence. Thus, Madam, have I given you a faithful account of my satisfactions and sorrows, the latter of which are mostly uppermost. You are a lady, I understand, of much sensibility. Let me therefore make my ease your own in the following manner, and then you will judge of my feelings. Suppose you were to be kidnapped away *to-morrow*, in the bloom of your life, to the land of Tortoises, and were never to see again for fifty years a human face !!! Think on this, dear lady, and pity

Your sorrowful Reptile,

TIMOTHY.

## WILLIAM COWPER

1731-1800

It is easy to tell the story of Cowper's life in his own words. 'I live only to write letters', he remarks to Lady Hesketh on one occasion ; and, shut off from the great world as he was, from the time of his second breakdown in 1763 to the day of his death in 1800, it would have gone hard with him without the continual comfort of his correspondence with his little circle of devoted friends. It was indeed hard enough as it was. And after the Fatal Dream of 1773, when, as Mr. Thomas Wright has pointed out in his well-known biography of the poet, 'he crossed the line that divided a life of hope from a life of despair'—the dream that convinced Cowper that God had forsaken him for ever—the wonder is that he could still write so many letters brimming over with fun. In his correspondence with William Unwin there is an interesting comparison between his own method of letter-writing and that of Pope. 'Your mother', he writes, 'communicated to me the satisfaction you expressed in my correspondence, that you thought me entertaining, and clever, and so forth. Now you must know I love praise dearly, especially from the judicious, and those who have so much delicacy themselves as not to offend mine in giving it. But then, I found this consequence attending, or likely to attend, the eulogium you bestowed—if my friend thought me witty before, he shall think me ten times more witty hereafter—where I joked once, I will joke five times, and, for one sensible remark, I will send him a dozen. Now this foolish vanity would have spoiled me quite, and would have made me as disgusting a letter-writer as Pope, who seems to have thought that unless a sentence was well-turned, and every period pointed with some conceit, it was not worth the carriage. Accordingly he



is to me, except in a very few instances, the most disagreeable maker of epistles that ever I met with. I was willing, therefore, to wait till the impression your commendation had made upon the foolish part of me was worn off, that I might scribble away as usual, and write my uppermost thoughts, and those only'.

This was just after John Newton had left Olney, and there is no doubt that the departure of the burning Calvinist, who was feared as much as he was loved by the gentle-hearted Cowper, was a turning-point in the poet's life. The effect of this departure on Cowper, as Mrs. Oliphant says, 'was miraculous; whether Newton, in his intense enthusiasm, miscalculated his friend's powers, or whether he was only ignorant of the delicate nature of the mind on which he was working, it is evident that the constant intercourse with him, aided, perhaps, by the wearying sameness of the life, had an oppressive and crushing effect upon Cowper'. It was after his departure that Cowper started his first volume of poems, encouraged in the beginning by Mrs. Unwin, who saw that the occupation of writing was doing him good; but it is to Lady Austen, who came into his life in the following year, that we owe Cowper's immortal *Task*, as well as *John Gilpin*, and much of his other work. The story of the origin of *The Task* has often been told—how Lady Austen kept urging the poet to try his hand at blank verse, and how at length he promised to make the attempt if she would suggest a subject. 'Oh' she replied, 'you can never be in want of a subject; you can write upon any—write upon this sofa!' It is not so clear how this friendship, which meant so much to Cowper's literary career, came to an end. Much has been written about the alleged jealousy between Mrs. Unwin and Lady Austen, and if Mrs. Unwin had any feelings of the kind after all that she had done for Cowper this was not, perhaps, to be wondered at. It seems clear that Lady Austen had fallen in love with the poet, and she certainly had reason at times for supposing that there was something more in his feelings towards her than the brotherly love which he vowed for her in the early days of their friendship. In his account of Lady Austen to his cousin Lady Hesketh, he shows that he came to begrudge the time which the Muse who had inspired the *Task* demanded of him, but he does not tell her at the same time that he had ended his friendship with Lady Austen by 'a very tender yet resolute letter, in which he explained and lamented the circumstances that forced him to renounce her society'—the circumstances arising from his discovery that she had lost her heart to him. Lady Austen, in her anger, burnt the letter, and passed out of Cowper's life as suddenly as she had entered it. 'The thoughts of love—anything more than a brotherly and sisterly love', writes Mr. Wright, 'had never entered his mind, for since his dreadful derangement at the vicarage he had given up all thoughts of marriage (it should be remembered, too, that he was in his fifty-fourth year), and seeing himself called on to renounce either one lady or the other, he felt it to be his bounden duty to cling to Mrs. Unwin, to whose kindness he had been indebted for so many years'. The reappearance of Lady Hesketh upon the scene in the following year helped to fill the gap caused by the loss of Lady Austen, but it was not long before Cowper was stricken with another attack of his old ailment, and the deepening gloom of his closing years is shown in the last of his letters now reprinted—written to Lady Hesketh from Mundesley, the little village on the Norfolk coast, to

which his kinsman, the Rev. John Johnson ('Johnny of Norfolk') had removed the poet and Mrs. Unwin in 1795 in the hope that the sea air might do both the invalids some good. Cowper remained, however, 'the most forlorn of beings. I tread a shore under a burden of infinite despair that I once trod all cheerfulness and joy'—for Mundesley had been one of the happiest scenes of his boyhood and youth—and the emotion which he felt at the death of Mrs. Unwin during their stay with Mr. Johnson at East Dereham in 1796 was only momentary. When the poet himself died in 1800 he was buried by her side in East Dereham Church.

WILLIAM COWPER TO CLOTWORTHY ROWLEY <sup>1</sup>

[*Philosophy at thirty-one*]

September 2, 1762.

DEAR ROWLEY,—

Your letter has taken me just in the crisis ; to-morrow I set off for Brighthelmston, and there I stay till the winter brings us all to town again. This world is a shabby fellow, and uses us ill ; but a few years hence there will be no difference between us and our fathers of the tenth generation upwards. I could be as splenetick as you, and with more reason, if I thought proper to indulge that humour ; but my resolution is (and I would advise you to adopt it) never to be melancholy while I have a hundred pounds in the world to keep up my spirits. God knows how long that will be ; but in the meantime *Io Triumphe* ! If a great man struggling with misfortunes is a noble object, a little man that despises them is no contemptible one ; and this is all the philosophy I have in the world at present. It savours pretty much of the ancient Stoic ; but till the Stoics became coxcombs they were, in my opinion, a very sensible sect.

If my resolution to be a great man was half so strong as it is to despise the shame of being a little one, I should not despair of a house in Lincoln's Inn Fields, with all its appurtenances ; for there is nothing more certain, and I could prove

<sup>1</sup> Rowley was Cowper's 'delightfully funny friend' and fellow Templar. Cowper himself, who was called to the bar in 1754, was at this time holding a sinecure appointment as 'commissioner of bankrupts' at £60 a year, but he never had much inclination for the law, 'resting', as Southey says, 'in indolent reliance upon his patrimonial means, and in the likely expectation that some official appointment would be found for him in good time'. When the offer of a clerkship in the House of Lords came in 1763, however, Cowper was thrown into such a nervous fever by fear of opposition that he tried several times to commit suicide. He was removed to a private asylum at St. Alban's, where he gradually recovered, and in June, 1765, was fit to vegetate alone at Huntingdon. It was here that the poet struck up the memorable friendship with the Unwins, in whose house he soon became a boarder.

it by a thousand instances, than that every man may be rich if he will. What is the industry of half the industrious men in the world but avarice, and call it by what name you will, it almost always succeeds. But this provokes me, that a covetous dog who will work by candlelight in a morning to get what he does not want, shall be praised with his thriftiness, while a gentleman shall be abused for submitting to his wants rather than work like an ass to relieve them. Did you ever in your life know a man who was guided in the general course of his actions by anything but his natural temper? And yet we blame each other's conduct as freely as if that temper was the most tractable beast in the world, and we had nothing to do but to twitch the rein to the right or the left, and go just as we are directed by others. All this is nonsense, and nothing better.

There are some sensible folks, who having great estates have wisdom enough too to spend them properly; there are others who are not less wise, perhaps, as knowing how to shift without 'em. Between these two degrees are they who spend their money dirtily, or get it so. If you ask me where they are to be placed who amass much wealth in an honest way, you must be so good as to find them first, and then I'll answer the question. Upon the whole, my dear Rowley, there is a degree of poverty that has no disgrace belonging to it; that degree of it, I mean, in which a man enjoys clean linen and good company; and if I never sink below this degree of it, I care not if I ever rise above it. This is a strange epistle, nor can I imagine how the devil I came to write it: but here it is, such as it is, and much good may you do with it. I have no estate, as it happens, so if it should fall into bad hands, I shall be in no danger of a commission of lunacy. Adieu!

Yours ever,  
WM. COWPER.

WILLIAM COWPER TO LADY HESKETH

[*Restored to reason*]

Huntingdon, *July 1, 1765.*

MY DEAR LADY HESKETH,—

Since the visit you were so kind to pay me in the Temple (the  
L.L.M.—i

Y

only time I ever saw you without pleasure)<sup>1</sup> what have I not suffered ! And since it had pleased God to restore me to the use of my reason, what have I not enjoyed ! You know, by experience, how pleasant it is to feel the first approaches of health after a fever ; but, oh ! the fever of the brain ! To feel the quenching of that fire is indeed a blessing which I think it impossible to receive without the most consummate gratitude. Terrible as this chastisement is, I acknowledge it in the hand of an infinite justice ; nor is it at all more difficult for me to perceive in it the hand of an infinite mercy likewise : when I consider the effect it has upon me, I am exceedingly thankful for it, and, without hypocrisy, esteem it the greatest blessing next to life itself, I ever received from the divine bounty. I pray God that I may ever retain this sense of it, and then I am sure I shall continue to be, as I am at present, really happy.

I write thus to you that you may not think me a forlorn and wretched creature ; which you might be apt to do, considering my very distant removal from every friend I have in the world ; a circumstance which, before this event befell me, would undoubtedly have made me so : but my affliction has taught me a road to happiness which, without it, I should never have found ; and I know, and have experience of it every day, that the mercy of God, to him who believes himself the object of it, is more than sufficient to compensate for the loss of every other blessing.

You may inform all those whom you think really interested in my welfare, that they have no need to be apprehensive on the score of my happiness at present. And you yourself will believe that my happiness is no dream, because I have told you the foundation on which it is built. What I have written would appear like enthusiasm to many, for we are apt to give that name to every warm affection of the mind in others which we have not experienced in ourselves ; but to you, who have so much to be thankful for, and a tender incline to gratitude, it will not appear so.

I beg you will give my love to Sir Thomas, and believe that I am obliged to you both for inquiring after me, at St. Alban's.

Yours ever,

W. C.

<sup>1</sup> Lady Hesketh, who, with Sir Thomas, called upon him in his chambers in the Temple, was one of the last of his relatives to see him before his removal to the asylum at St. Alban's, but he neither spoke to her on that occasion, nor listened to what she said.



## WILLIAM COWPER TO LADY HESKETH

[*His life with the Unwins*]Huntingdon, *October 13, 1765.*

I WISH you joy, my dear cousin, of being safely arrived in port from the storms of Southampton. For my own part, who am but a Thames wherry, in a world full of tempest and commotion, I know so well the value of the creek I have put into, and the snugness it affords me, that I have a sensible sympathy with you in the pleasure you find in being once more blown to Droxford. I know enough of Miss Morley to send her my compliments ; to which, if I had never seen her, her affection for you would sufficiently entitle her. If I neglected to do it sooner, it is only because I am naturally apt to neglect what I ought to do ; and if I was as genteel as I am negligent, I should be the most delightful creature in the universe.

I am glad you think so favourably of my Huntingdon acquaintance ; they are indeed a nice set of folks, and suit me exactly. I should have been more particular in my account of Miss Unwin,<sup>1</sup> if I had had materials of a minute description. She is about eighteen years of age, rather handsome and genteel. In her mother's company she says little ; not because her mother requires it of her, but because she seems glad of that excuse for not talking, being somewhat inclined to bashfulness. There is the most remarkable cordiality between all the parts of the family ; and the mother and daughter seem to dote upon each other. The first time I went to the house I was introduced to the daughter alone ; and sat with her near half an hour, before her brother came in, who had appointed me to call upon him. Talking is necessary in a *tête-à-tête*, to distinguish the persons of the drama from the chairs they sit on : accordingly she talked a great deal, and extremely well ; and, like the rest of the family, behaved with as much ease of address as if we had been old acquaintance. She resembles her mother in her great piety, who is one of the most remarkable instances of it I have ever seen. They are altogether the cheerfullest and most engaging family piece it is possible to conceive.

<sup>1</sup> Susannah Unwin was married to the Rev. Matthew Powley in 1774. She was the only member of the Unwins who objected to Cowper's presence in the family, complaining—without, however, the poet's knowledge,—that her mother was wasting her property upon him.



Since I wrote the above I met Mrs. Unwin in the street, and went home with her. She and I walked together near two hours in the garden, and had a conversation which did me more good than I should have received from an audience of the first prince in Europe. That woman is a blessing to me, and I never see her without being the better for her company. I am treated in the family as if I was a near relation, and have been repeatedly invited to call upon them at all times. You know what a shy fellow I am ; I cannot prevail with myself to make so much use of this privilege as I am sure they intend I should ; but perhaps this awkwardness will wear off hereafter. It was my earnest request before I left St. Alban's, that wherever it might please Providence to dispose of me, I might meet with such an acquaintance as I find in Mrs. Unwin. How happy it is to believe, with a steadfast assurance, that our petitions are heard even while we are making them ; and how delightful to meet with a proof of it in the effectual and actual grant of them ! Surely it is a gracious finishing given to those means which the Almighty has been pleased to make use of for my conversion. After having been deservedly rendered unfit for any society, to be again qualified for it, and admitted at once into the fellowship of those whom God regards as the excellent of the earth, and whom, in the emphatical language of Scripture, He preserves as the apple of His eye, is the blessing which carries with it the stamp and visible superscription of divine bounty, a grace unlimited as undeserved ; and, like its glorious Author, free in its course, and blessed in its operation ! My dear cousin, health and happiness, and above all, the favour of our great and gracious Lord, attend you ! Whilst we seek it in spirit and in truth, we are infinitely more secure of it than of the next breath we expect to draw. Heaven and earth have their destined periods ; ten thousand worlds will vanish at the consummation of all things ; but the word of God standeth fast ; and they who trust in Him shall never be confounded.

My love to all who inquire after me.

Yours affectionately,

W. C.

WILLIAM COWPER TO MRS COWPER <sup>1</sup>*[His piety and why he declines to take orders]*

Huntingdon, October 20, 1766.

MY DEAR COUSIN,—

I am obliged to you for the interest you take in my welfare, and for your inquiring so particularly after the manner in which my time passes here. As to amusements, I mean what the world calls such, we have none ; the place indeed swarms with them, and cards and dancing are the professed business of almost all the gentle inhabitants of Huntingdon. We refuse to take part in them, or to be accessories to this way of murdering our time, and by doing so have acquired the name of Methodists. Having told you how we do not spend our time, I will next say how we do. We breakfast commonly between eight and nine ; till eleven, we read either the Scripture, or the sermons of some faithful preacher of those holy mysteries ; at eleven we attend divine service, which is performed here twice a day ; and from twelve to three we separate and amuse ourselves as we please. During that interval I either read in my own apartment, or walk, or ride, or work in the garden. We seldom sit an hour after dinner, but if the weather permits adjourn to the garden, where with Mrs. Unwin and her son I have generally the pleasure of religious conversation till tea-time. If it rains, or is too windy for walking, we either converse within doors, or sing some hymns of Martin's collection, and by the help of Mrs. Unwin's harpsichord make up a tolerable concert, in which our hearts, I hope, are the best and most musical performers. After tea we sally forth to walk in good earnest. Mrs. Unwin is a good walker, and we have generally travelled about four miles before we see home again. When the days are short, we make this excursion in the former part of the day, between church-time and dinner. At night we read and converse, as before, till supper, and commonly finish the evening either with hymns or a sermon ; and last of all the family are called to prayers. I need not tell you, that such a life as this is consistent with the utmost cheerfulness ; accordingly we are all happy, and dwell together in unity as brethren. Mrs. Unwin has almost a maternal affection for me, and I have

<sup>1</sup> Mrs. Frances Maria Cowper, wife of Major Cowper, and first cousin both to the poet and her husband.

something very like a filial one for her, and her son and I are brothers. Blessed be the God of our salvation for such companions, and for such a life ; above all, for a heart to like it.

I have had many anxious thoughts about taking orders, and I believe every convert is apt to think himself called upon for that purpose ; but it has pleased God, by means which there is no need to particularize, to give me full satisfaction as to the propriety of declining it ; indeed, they who have the least idea of what I have suffered from the dread of public exhibitions, will readily excuse my never attempting them hereafter. In the meantime, if it please the Almighty, I may be an instrument of turning many to the truth in a private way, and I hope that my endeavours in this way have not been entirely unsuccessful. Had I the zeal of Moses, I should want an Aaron to be my spokesman.

Yours ever, dear cousin,  
W. C.

WILLIAM COWPER TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN

[*Tranquil days at Olney*]

Olney, September 21, 1779.<sup>1</sup>

AMICO MIO,—

Be pleased to buy me a glazier's diamond peneil. I have glazed the two frames designed to receive my pine plants ; but I cannot mend the kitchen windows, till by the help of that implement I can reduce the glass to its proper dimensions. If I were a plumber I should be a complete glazier ; and possibly the happy time may come, when I shall be seen trudging away to the neighbouring towns with a shelf of glass hanging at my back. If government should impose another tax upon that commodity, I hardly know a business in which a gentleman might more successfully employ himself. A Chinese, of ten times my fortune, would avail himself of such

<sup>1</sup> Many things had happened between the writing of this letter and its predecessor—Mrs. Unwin had lost her husband, and removed with her family and Cowper to Olney ; her son had also left her to become Rector of Stock, and her daughter to become the wife of the Rev. M. Powley. At the end of 1772 Cowper and Mrs. Unwin entered into a contract of marriage, but the poet again became deranged before the ceremony could take place. 'I believed', he wrote afterwards, 'that everybody hated me, and that Mrs. Unwin hated me most of all'. So John Newton, who was then curate of Olney, sheltered him in the Vicarage for nearly a year and five months, when he recovered. Seven months before this letter was written, Newton published the *Olney Hymns*—sixty-eight of them being by Cowper.

an opportunity without scruple ; and why should not I, who want mony as much as any mandarin in China ? Rousseau would have been charmed to have seen me so occupied, and would have exclaimed with rapture ' that he had found the Emilius who (he supposed) has subsisted only in his own idea '. I will recommend it to you to follow my example. You will presently qualify yourself for the task, and may not only amuse yourself at home, but may even exercise your skill in mending the church windows ; which, as it would save money to the parish, would conduce, together with your other ministerial accomplishments, to make you extremely popular in the place.

I have eight pairs of tame pigeons. When I first enter the garden in a morning, I find them perched upon the wall, waiting for their breakfast ; for I feed them always upon the gravel-walk. If your wish should be accomplished, and you should find yourself furnished with the wings of a dove, I shall undoubtedly find you amongst them. Only be so good, if that should be the case, to announce yourself by some means or other. For I imagine your crop will require something better than tares to fill it.

Your mother and I last week made a trip in a post-chaise at Gayhurst, the seat of Mr. Wright, about four miles off. He understood that I did not much affect strange faces, and sent over his servant on purpose to inform me that he was going into Leicestershire, and that if I chose to see the gardens, I might gratify myself without danger of seeing the proprietor. I accepted the invitation, and was delighted with all I found there. The situation is happy, the gardens elegantly disposed, the hot-house in the most flourishing state, and the orange trees the most captivating creatures of the kind I ever saw. A man, in short, had need have the talents of Cox or Langford, the auctioneers, to do the whole scene justice.

Our love attends you all.

Yours,  
W. C.

WILLIAM COWPER TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN

[His 'whisking wit']

Olney, *February 27, 1780.*

MY DEAR FRIEND,—

As you are pleased to desire my letters, I am the more pleased with writing them ; though at the same time I must needs testify my surprise that you should think them worth receiving, as I seldom send one that I think favourably of myself. This is not to be understood as an imputation upon your taste or judgment, but as an encomium upon my own modesty and humility, which I desire you to remark well. It is a just observation of Sir Joshua Reynolds, that though men of ordinary talents may be highly satisfied with their own productions, men of true genius never are. Whatever be their subject they always seem to themselves to fall short of it, even when they seem to others most to excel. And for this reason—because they have a certain sublime sense of perfection, which other men are strangers to, and which they themselves in their performances are not able to exemplify. Your servant, Sir Joshua ! I little thought of seeing you when I began ; but as you have popped in you are welcome.

When I wrote last, I was a little inclined to send you a copy of verses entitled *The Modern Patriot*, but was not quite pleased with a line or two, which I found it difficult to mend, therefore did not. At night I read Mr. Burke's speech in the newspaper, and was so well pleased with his proposals for a reformation, and with the temper in which he made them, that I began to think better of his cause, and burnt my verses. Such is the lot of the man who writes upon the subject of the day ; the aspect of affairs changes in an hour or two, and his opinion with it ; what was just and well-deserved satire in the morning, in the evening becomes a libel ; the author commences his own judge, and while he condemns with unrelenting severity what he so lately approved, is sorry to find that he has laid his leaf-gold upon touchwood, which crumbled away under his fingers. Alas ! what can I do with my wit ? I have not enough to do great things with, and these little things are so fugitive, that while a man catches at a subject, he is only filling his hand with smoke. I must do with it as



I do with my linnet ; I keep him for the most part in a cage, but now and then set open the door, that he may whisk about the room a little, and then shut him up again. My whisking wit has produced the following,<sup>1</sup> the subject of which is more important than the manner in which I have treated it seems to imply, but a fable may speak truth, and all truth is sterling ; I only premise, that in a philosophical tract in the Register, I found it asserted that the glowworm is the nightingale's food.

WILLIAM COWPER TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN

[*Writing without thinking*]

August 6, 1780.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—

You like to hear from me : this is a very good reason why I should write. But I have nothing to say ; this seems equally a good reason why I should not. Yet, if you had alighted from your horse at our door this morning, and at this present writing, being five o'clock in the afternoon, had found occasion to say to me,—‘ Mr. Cowper, you have not spoken since I came in ; have you resolved never to speak again ? ’ it would be but a poor reply, if, in answer to the summons, I should plead inability as my best and only excuse. And this, by the way, suggests to me a seasonable piece of instruction, and reminds me of what I am very apt to forget, when I have any epistolary business in hand, that a letter may be written upon anything or nothing, just as anything or nothing happens to occur. A man that has a journey before him, twenty miles in length, which he is to perform on foot, will not hesitate and doubt whether he shall set out or not, because he does not readily conceive how he shall ever reach the end of it ; for he knows, that by the simple operation of moving one foot forward first, and then the other, he shall be sure to accomplish it. So it is in the present case, and so it is in every similar case. A letter is written as a conversation is maintained, or a journey performed ; not by preconcerted, or premeditated means, a new contrivance, or an invention never heard of before,—but merely by maintaining a progress, and resolving as a postilion does, having once set out, never to stop

<sup>1</sup> The fable of the Nightingale and Glowworm was enclosed in this letter.

till we reach the appointed end. If a man may talk without thinking, why may he not write upon the same terms? A grave gentleman of the last century, a tie-wig, square-toe, Steinkirk figure, would say, 'My good sir, a man has no right to do either'. But it is to be hoped that the present century has nothing to do with the mouldy opinions of the last; and so, good Sir Launcelot, or Sir Paul, or whatever be your name, step into your picture-frame again, and look as if you thought for another century, and leave us moderns, in the meantime, to think when we can, and to write whether we can or not, else we might as well be dead, as you are.

When we look back upon our forefathers, we seem to look back upon the people of another nation, almost upon creatures of another species. Their vast rambling mansions, spacious halls, and painted casements, the gothic porch smothered with honeysuckles, their little gardens and high walls, their box-edging, balls of holly, and yew-tree statues, are become so entirely unfashionable now, that we can hardly believe it possible, that a people who resembled us so little in their tastes, should resemble us in anything else. But in everything else, I suppose, they were our counterparts exactly; and time, that has sewed up the slashed sleeve and reduced the large trunk hose to a neat pair of silk-stockings, has left human nature just where it found it. The inside of the man, at least, has undergone no change. His passions, appetites, and aims, are just what they ever were. They wear, perhaps, a handsomer disguise than they did in days of yore; for philosophy and literature will have their effect upon the exterior; but in every other respect a modern is only an ancient in a different dress.

W. C.

WILLIAM COWPER TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON <sup>1</sup>

[*An Epistle in rhyme*]

July 12, 1781.

MY VERY DEAR FRIEND,—

I am going to send what when you have read you may scratch your head, and say, I suppose, there's nobody knows,

<sup>1</sup> Newton left Olney at the beginning of 1780, having been presented with the living of St. Mary, Woolnoth, in the city of London. Here he died, December 31, 1807.

whether what I have got, be verse or not ; by the tune and the time, it ought to be rhyme ; but if it be, did you ever see, of late or of yore, such a ditty before ? The thought did occur, to me and to her, as madam and I, did walk and not fly, over the hills and dales, with spreading sails, before it was dark to Weston Park.

The news at *Oney* is little or none ; but such as it is, I send it, viz. : Poor Mr. Peace cannot yet cease, addling his head with what you said, and has left parish-church quite in the lurch, having almost sworn to go there no more.

Page and his wife, that made such a strife, we met them twain in Dog-lane ; we gave them the wall, and that was all. For Mr. Scott, we have seen him not, except as he pass'd, in a wonderful haste, to see a friend in Silver End. Mrs. Jones proposes, ere July closes, that she and her sister, and her Jones mister, and we that are here, our course shall steer, to dine in the Spinney ; but for a guinea, if the weather should hold, so hot and so cold, we had better by far, stay where we are. For the grass there grows, while nobody mows (which is very wrong), so rank and long, that so to speak, 'tis at least a week, if it happens to rain, ere it dries again.

I have writ *Charity*, not for popularity, but as well as I could, in hopes to do good ; and if the Reviewer should say 'to be sure, the gentleman's Muse, wears methodist shoes ; you may know by her pace, and talk about grace, that she and her bard have little regard, for the taste and fashions, and ruling passions, and hoidening play, of the modern day ; and though she assume a borrowed plume, and here and there wear a tittering air, 'tis only her plan, to catch if she can, the giddy and gay, as they go that way, by a production, on a new construction. She has baited her trap in hopes to snap all that may come, with a sugar-plum'.

— His opinion in this, will not be amiss ; 'tis what I intend, my principal end ; and if I succeed, and folks should read, till a few are brought to a serious thought, I shall think I am paid, for all I have said and all I have done, though I have run, many a time, after a rhyme, as far as from hence, to the end of my sense, and by hook or crook, write another book, if I live and am here, another year. I have heard before, of a room with a floor, laid upon springs, and such like things, with so much art, in every part, that when you went

in, you was forced to begin a minuet pace, with an air and a grace, swimming about, now in and now out, with a deal of state, in a figure of eight, without pipe or string, or any such thing ; and now I have writ, in a rhyming fit, what will make you dance, and as you advance, will keep you still, though against your will, dancing away, alert and gay, till you come to an end of what I have penn'd ; which that you may do, ere madam and you are quite worn out with jiggling about, I take my leave, and here you receive a vow profound, down to the ground, from your humble me,

W. C.

WILLIAM COWPER TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON

[*'Table Talk'*]

February 18, 1781.

I SEND you *Table Talk*. It is a medley of many things, some that may be useful, and some that, for aught I know, may be very diverting. I am merry that I may decoy people into my company, and grave that they may be the better for it. Now and then I put on the garb of a philosopher, and take the opportunity that disguise procures me, to drop a word in favour of religion. In short, there is some froth, and here and there a bit of sweetmeat which seems to entitle it justly to the name of a certain dish the ladies call a trifle. I did not choose to be more facetious, lest I should consult the taste of my readers at the expense of my own approbation ; nor more serious than I have been lest I should forfeit theirs. A poet in my circumstances has a difficult part to act : one minute obliged to bridle his humour, if he has any, and the next to clap a spur to the sides of it ; now ready to weep from a sense of the importance of his subject, and on a sudden constrained to laugh, lest his gravity should be mistaken for dulness. If this be not violent exercise for the mind, I know not what is ; and if any man doubt it, let him try. Whether all this management and contrivance be necessary I do not know, but am inclined to suspect that if my Muse was to go forth clad in Quaker colour, without one bit of riband to enliven her appearance, she might walk from one end of London to the other as little noticed as if she were one of the sisterhood indeed.

## WILLIAM COWPER TO LADY AUSTEN

[*The 'Poetical Epistle' sent during 'Sister Anne's' absence  
in London*<sup>1</sup>]

December 17, 1781.

DEAR Anna, between friend and friend,  
Prose answers every common end ;  
Serves in a plain and homely way,  
T' express th' occurrence of the day ;  
Our health, the weather, and the news,  
What walks we take, what books we choose ;  
And all the floating thoughts we find  
Upon the surface of the mind.

But when a poet takes the pen,  
Far more alive than other men,  
He feels a gentle tingle come  
Down to his finger and his thumb,  
Deriv'd from nature's noblest part,  
The centre of a glowing heart,  
And this is what the world, who knows  
No flights above the pitch of prose,  
His more sublime vagaries slighting,  
Denominates an itch for writing.  
No wonder I, who scribble rhyme,  
To catch the triflers of the time,  
And tell them truths divine and clear,  
Which, couch'd in prose, they will not hear ;  
Who labour hard to allude and draw  
The loiterers I never saw,  
Should feel that itching, and that tingling,  
With all my purpose intermingling,  
To your intrinsic merit true,  
When call'd t' address myself to you.

Mysterious are His ways, whose power  
Brings forth that unexpected hour,

<sup>1</sup> The new friendship between Lady Austen and the poet—Sister Anne and Brother William as they now preferred to call each other—helped to make the summer of this year probably the happiest that Cowper had ever spent. Lady Austen returned to London in October, but in the following year—after a temporary break in their friendship which foreshadowed their final separation in the spring of 1784—she was settled in Newton's deserted Vicarage, next door to Cowper's house.



When minds that never met before,  
Shall meet, unite and part no more :  
In it th' allotment of the skies,  
The hand of the supremely Wise,  
That guides and governs our affections,  
And plans and orders our connections ;  
Directs us in our distant road,  
And marks the bounds of our abode.  
Thus we were settled when you found us,  
Peasants and children all around us,  
Not dreaming of so dear a friend,  
Deep in the Abyss of Silver-End <sup>1</sup> ;  
Thus Martha—e'en against her will—  
Perch'd on the top of yonder hill ;  
And you—though you must needs prefer  
The fairer scenes of sweet Sancerre <sup>2</sup>—  
Are come from distant Loire, to choose  
A cottage on the banks of Ouse.  
This page of Providence, quite new,  
Employs our present thoughts and pains  
To guess, and spell, what it contains :  
But day by day, and year by year,  
Will make the dark enigma clear ;  
And furnish us, perhaps, at last,  
Like other scenes already past,  
With proof, that we, and our affairs,  
Are part of a Jehovah's cares :  
For God unfolds by slow degrees  
The purport of His deep decrees ;  
Sheds every hour a clearer light  
In aid of our defective sight ;  
And spreads, at length, before the soul  
A beautiful and perfect whole,  
Which busy man's inventive brain  
Toils to anticipate in vain.  
Say, Anna, had you ever known  
The beauties of a rose full blown ;  
Could you, though luminous your eye,  
By looking on the bud, descry,

<sup>1</sup> An obscure part of Olney, adjoining the residence of Cowper, which faced the market place.

<sup>2</sup> Lady Austen's residence in France.

Or guess, with a prophetic power,  
The future splendour of the flower ?  
Just so, the Omnipotent, who turns  
The system of a world's concerns,  
From mere minutiae can educe  
Events of most important use,  
And bid a dawning sky display  
The blaze of a meridian day.  
The works of man tend, one and all,  
As needs they must, from great to small ;  
And vanity absorbs at length  
The monuments of human strength.  
But who can tell how vast the plan,  
Which this day's incident began ?  
Too small, perhaps, the slight occasion  
For our dim-sighted observation ;  
It pass'd unnoticed, as the bird  
That cleaves the yielding air unheard ;  
And yet may prove, when understood,  
An harbinger of endless good.

Not that I deem, or mean to call,  
Friendship, a blessing cheap or small :  
But merely to remark, that ours,  
Like some of nature's sweetest flowers,  
Rose from a seed of tiny size,  
That seem'd to promise no such prize :  
A transient visit intervening,  
And made almost without a meaning,  
(Hardly the effect of inclination,  
Much less of pleasing expectation,)  
Produc'd a friendship, then begun,  
That has cemented us in one ;  
And placed it in our power to prove,  
By long fidelity and love,  
That Solomon has wisely spoken ;  
" A threefold cord is not soon broken."

WILLIAM COWPER TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON

[*The popularity of 'John Gilpin'*]

April 22, 1785.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—

When I received your account of the great celebrity of John Gilpin, I felt myself both flattered and grieved. Being man, and having in my composition all the ingredients of which other men are made, and vanity among the rest, it pleased me to reflect that I was on a sudden become so famous, and that all the world was busy inquiring after me: but the next moment, recollecting my former self, and that thirteen years ago, as harmless as John's history is, I should not then have written it, my spirits sank, and I was ashamed of my success. Your letter was followed the next post by one from Mr. Unwin. You tell me that I am rivalled by Mrs. Bellamy<sup>1</sup>; and he, that I have a competitor for fame, not less formidable, in the Learned Pig. Alas! what is an author's popularity worth, in a world that can suffer a prostitute on one side, and a pig on the other, to eclipse his brightest glories? I am therefore sufficiently humbled by these considerations; and unless I should hereafter be ordained to engross the public attention by means more magnificent than a song, am persuaded that I shall suffer no real detriment by their applause. I have produced many things, under the influence of despair, which hope would not have permitted to spring. But if the soil of that melancholy, in which I have walked so long, has thrown up here and there an unprofitable fungus, it is well, at least, that it is not chargeable with having brought forth poison. Like you, I see, or think I can see, that Gilpin may have his use. Causes, in appearance trivial, produce often the most beneficial consequences; and perhaps my volumes may now travel to a distance, which, if they had not been ushered into the world by that notable horseman, they would never have reached. Our temper differs somewhat from that of the ancient Jews. They would neither dance nor weep. We indeed weep not, if a man mourn unto us; but I must needs say, that, if he pipe, we seem disposed to dance with the greatest alacrity.

Yours, W. C.

<sup>1</sup> Mrs. Bellamy, the illegitimate daughter of Lord Tyrawley, had a brilliant career as an actress, but her extravagance and profligacy brought her to reduced circumstances. In 1785 a 'free benefit' released her from the debtors' prison.

## WILLIAM COWPER TO LADY HESKETH

[*The state of his finances and his translation of Homer*]

Olney, November 9, 1785.

MY DEAREST COUSIN,—

Whose last most affectionate letter has run in my head ever since I received it, and which I now sit down to answer, two days sooner than the post will serve it. I thank you for it, and with a warmth for which I am sure you will give me credit, though I do not spend many words in describing it. I do not seek new friends, not being altogether sure that I should find them, but have unspeakable pleasure in being still beloved by an old one. I hope that now our correspondence has suffered its last interruption, that we shall go down together to the grave, chatting and chirping as merrily as such a scene of things as this will permit.<sup>1</sup>

I am happy that my poems have pleased you. My volume has afforded me no such pleasure at any time, either while I was writing it, or since its publication, as I have derived from yours, and my Uncle's opinion of it. I make certain allowances for partiality and for that peculiar quickness of taste with which you both relish what you like, and after all drawbacks, upon those accounts, duly made, find myself rich in the measure of your approbation that still remains. But, above all, I honour John Gilpin, since it was he who first encouraged you to write. I made him on purpose to laugh at, and he served his purpose well; but I am now in debt to him for a more valuable acquisition than all the laughter in the world amounts to, the recovery of my intercourse with you, which is to me inestimable. My benevolent and generous Cousin, when I was once asked, if I wanted anything, and given delicately to understand, that the inquirer was ready to supply all my occasions, I thankfully and civilly, but positively declined the favour. I neither suffer, nor have suffered, any such inconveniences as I had not much rather endure than come under obligations of that sort to a

<sup>1</sup> One of the happiest results of the publication of Cowper's second volume was that it brought a renewal of the correspondence between the poet and his cousin, Lady Hesketh, who had been repelled by the religious views expressed in his letters while at Huntingdon. Lady Hesketh had now been a widow seven years, and, having broken the ice, inquired in a second letter as to the state of Cowper's finances, offering to assist him in case of need. This is Cowper's reply.

person comparatively with yourself a stranger to me. But to you I answer otherwise. I know you thoroughly, and the liberality of your disposition, and have that consummate confidence in the sincerity of your wish to serve me, that delivers me from all awkward constraint, and from all fear of trespassing by acceptance. To you, therefore, I reply yes. Whensoever and whatsoever, and in what manner soever you please; and add moreover that my affection for the giver is such, and will increase to me tenfold the satisfaction that I shall have in receiving. It is necessary however that I should let you a little into that state of my finances, that you may not suppose them more narrowly circumscribed than they are. Since Mrs. Unwin and I have lived at Olney, we have had but one purse, although the whole of that time, till lately, her income was nearly double mine. Her revenues indeed are now in some measure reduced, and do not much exceed my own; the worst consequence of this is, that we are forced to deny ourselves some things which hitherto we have been better able to afford, but they are such things as neither life nor the well-being of life depends upon. My own income has been better than it is, but when it was best, it would not have enabled me to live as my connexions demanded that I should, had it not been combined with a better than itself, at least to this end of the kingdom. Of this I have full proof during the three months that I spent in lodgings at Huntingdon, in which time by the help of good management, and a clear notion of economical matters, I contrived to spend the income of a twelvemonth. Now, my beloved cousin, you are in possession of the whole case as it stands. Strain no point to your own inconvenience or hurt, for there is no need of it, but indulge yourself in communicating (no matter what) that you can spare without missing it, since by so doing you will be sure to add to the comforts of my life one of the sweetest that I can enjoy—a token and proof of your affection.

In the affair of my next publication, towards which you also offer me so kindly your assistance, there will be no need that you should help me in the manner that you propose. It will be a large work, consisting, I should imagine, of six volumes at least. The twelfth of this month I shall have spent a year upon it, and it will cost me more than another.



I do not love the booksellers well enough to make them a present of such a labour, but intend to publish by subscription. Your vote and interest, my dear Cousin, upon the occasion, if you please, but nothing more! I will trouble you with some papers of proposals when the time shall come, and am sure that you will circulate as many for me as you can. Now, my dear, I am going to tell you a secret. It is a great secret, that you must not whisper to your cat. No creature is at this moment apprized of it but Mrs. Unwin and her son. I am making a new translation of Homer,<sup>1</sup> and am on the point of finishing the twenty-first book of the Iliad. The reasons upon which I undertake this Herculean labour, and by which I justify an enterprise in which I seem so effectually anticipated by Pope, although in fact he has not anticipated me at all, I may possibly give you, if you wish for them, when I can find nothing more interesting to say. A period which I do not conceive to be very near! I have not answered many things in your letter, nor can do it at present for want of room. I cannot believe but that I should know you, notwithstanding all that time may have done. There is not a feature of your face, could I meet it upon the road by itself, that I should not instantly recollect. I should say, that is my Cousin's nose, or those are her lips and her chin, and no woman upon earth can claim them but herself. As for me, I am a very smart youth of my years. I am not indeed grown grey so much as I am grown bald. No matter. There was more hair in the world than ever had the honour to belong to me. Accordingly, having found just enough to curl a little at my ears, and to intermix with a little of my own that still hangs behind, I appear, if you see me in an afternoon, to have a very decent headdress, not easily distinguished from my natural growth, which, being worn with a small bag, and a black riband about the neck, continues to me the charms of my youth, even on the verge of age. Away with the fear of writing too often.

W. C.

P.S.—That the view I give you of myself may be complete I add the two following items—That I am in debt to nobody, and that I grow fat.

<sup>1</sup> Cowper's translation of Homer was published by subscription in 1791.

## WILLIAM COWPER TO LADY HESKETH

[*His memorable friendship with Lady Austen*]

Olney.

THERE came a lady into this country, by name and title, Lady Austen, the widow of the late Sir Robert Austen. At first she lived with her sister, about a mile from Olney ; but in a few weeks took lodgings at the vicarage here. Between the vicarage and the back of our house are interposed our gardens, an orchard, and the garden belonging to the vicarage. She had lived much in France, was very sensible, and had infinite vivacity. She took a great liking to us, as we to her. She had been used to a great deal of company ; and we, fearing that she would find such a transition into silent retirement irksome, contrived to give her our agreeable company often. Becoming continually more and more intimate, a practice obtained at length of our dining with each other alternately, every day, Sunday excepted. In order to facilitate our communication, we made doors in the two garden walls abovesaid, by which means we considerably shortened the way from one house to the other ; and could meet when we pleased, without entering the town at all ; a measure the rather expedient, because the town is abominably dirty, and she kept no carriage. On her first settlement in our neighbourhood, I made it my own particular business (for at that time I was not employed in writing, having published my first volume, and not begun my second) to pay my devoirs to her ladyship every morning at eleven. Customs very soon became laws. I began the *Task* ; for she was the lady who gave me the sofa for the subject. Being once engaged in the work, I began to feel the inconvenience of my morning attendance. We had seldom breakfasted ourselves until ten, and the intervening hour was all the time that I could find in the whole day for writing ; and occasionally it would happen that the half of that hour was all that I could secure for the purpose. But there was no remedy. Long usage had made that which at first was optional, a point of good manners, and consequently of necessity, and I was forced to neglect the *Task* to attend upon the Muse who had inspired the subject. But she had ill health, and before I had quite finished the work was obliged to repair to Bristol. Thus, as I told you, my dear, the cause

of the many interruptions that I mentioned was removed, and now, except the Bull <sup>1</sup> that I spoke of, we have seldom any company at all. After all that I have said upon the matter, you will not completely understand me, perhaps, unless I account for the remainder of the day. I will add, therefore, that, having paid my morning visit, I walked; returning from the walk, I dressed: we then met and dined, and parted not till between ten and eleven at night!

WILLIAM COWPER TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON

[*On Pope's translation of Homer*]

December 10, 1785.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—

Your sentiments of Pope's Homer agree perfectly with those of every competent judge with whom I have at any time conversed about it. I never saw a copy so unlike the original. There is not, I believe, in all the world to be found an uninspired poem so simple as those of Homer; nor in all the world a poem more bedizened with ornaments than Pope's translation of them. Accordingly, the sublime of Homer in the hands of Pope becomes bloated and tumid, and his description tawdry. Neither had Pope the faintest conception of those exquisite discriminations of character for which Homer is so remarkable. All his persons, and equally upon all occasions, speak in an inflated and strutting phraseology, as Pope has managed them; although in the original, the dignity of their utterance, even when they are most majestic, consists principally in the simplicity of their sentiments and of their language. Another censure I must needs pass upon our Anglo-Grecian, out of many that obtrude themselves upon me, but for which I have neither time to spare, nor room; which is, that with all his great abilities he was defective in his feelings to a degree that some passages in his own poems make it difficult to account for. No writer more pathetic than Homer, because none more natural; and because none less natural than Pope in his version of Homer, therefore than he none less pathetic. But I shall tire you with a theme with which I would not wish to cloy you beforehand.

<sup>1</sup> The Rev. William Bull—his 'dear Taureau' as Cowper calls him—to whom Newton had introduced him on his removal from Olney.

If the great change in my experience, of which you express so lively an expectation, should take place, and whenever it shall take place, you may securely depend upon receiving the first notice of it. But whether you come with congratulations, or whether without them, I need not say that you and yours will always be most welcome here. Mrs. Unwin's love both to yourself and to Mrs. Newton joins itself as usual, and as warmly as usual, to that of

Yours, my dear friend,

Affectionately and faithfully,

WM. COWPER.

WILLIAM COWPER TO LADY HESKETH

[*Delightful anticipation of her visit*]

Olney, February 9, 1786.

MY DEAREST COUSIN,—

I have been impatient to tell you that I am impatient to see you again. Mrs. Unwin partakes with me in all my feelings upon this subject, and longs also to see you. . . . We shall take walks together. I will show you my prospects—the hovel, the alcove, the Ouse and its banks—everything that I have described. I anticipate the pleasure of those days not very far distant, and feel a part of it at this moment. Talk not of an inn! mention it not for your life! We have never had so many visitors, but we could easily accommodate them all, though we have received Unwin, and his wife, and his sister, and his son, all at once. My dear, I will not let you come till the end of May, or beginning of June; because before that time my greenhouse will not be ready to receive us, and it is the only pleasant room belonging to us. When the plants go out, we go in. I line it with mats, and spread the floor with mats; and there you shall sit, with a bed of mignonette at your side, and a hedge of honeysuckles, roses, and jasmine; and I will make you a bouquet of myrtle, every day. Sooner than the time I mention, the country will not be in complete beauty. And I will tell you what you shall find at your first entrance. Imprimis, As soon as you have entered the vestibule, if you cast a look on either side of you, you shall see on the right hand a box of my mak-

ing. It is the box in which have been lodged all my hares,<sup>1</sup> and in which lodges Puss at present. But he, poor fellow, is worn out with age, and promises to die before you can see him. On the right hand stands a cupboard, the work of the same author ; it was once a dove-cage, but I transformed it. Opposite to you stands a table, which I also made. But a merciless servant having scrubbed it until it became paralytic, it serves no purpose now but of ornament ; and all my clean shoes stand under it. On the left hand, at the further end of this superb vestibule, you will find the door of the parlour, into which I will conduct you, and where I will introduce you to Mrs. Unwin, unless we should meet her before, and where we shall be as happy as the day is long. Order yourself, my cousin, to the *Swan* at Newport, and there you shall find me ready to conduct you to Olney.

My dear, I have told Homer what you say about casks and urns, and have asked him, whether he is sure it is a cask in which Jupiter keeps his wine. He swears that it is a cask, and that it will never be anything better than a cask to eternity. So, if the god is content with it, we must even wonder at his taste, and be so too.

Adieu ! my dearest, dearest cousin.

WILLIAM COWPER TO WILLIAM HAYLEY <sup>2</sup>

[*Hunted by Spiritual hounds*']

Weston, July 29, 1792.

Through floods and flames to your retreat

I win my desperate way,

And when we meet, if e'er we meet,

Will echo your huzza !

<sup>1</sup> Cowper's tame hares were a feature of his life at Olney, but he indulged in many other pets besides these, and the 'eight pairs of tame pigeons' mentioned in one of his letters to William Unwin. Lady Hesketh has recorded 'that he had at one time five rabbits, three hares, two guinea pigs, a magpie, a jay, and a starling ; besides two goldfinches, two canary birds, and two dogs. It is amazing how the three hares can find room to gambol and frolic (as they certainly do) in his small parlour.'

<sup>2</sup> William Hayley, poet and biographer of Cowper, paid his first visit to his brother-poet two months before the date of this letter, and remained one of Cowper's best friends to the end of his days. Cowper had moved from Olney to the neighbouring village of Weston in 1786 and in the following year had a return of insanity, from which he never entirely recovered. He was more himself, however, at the time of Hayley's visit in 1792. 'Their reception of me', writes Hayley, 'was kindness itself. I was enchanted to find that the manners and conversation of Cowper resembled his poetry, charming by unaffected elegance, and the graces of a benevolent spirit. I looked with affectionate veneration and pleasure on the lady who had devoted her life and fortune to the service of this tender and sublime genius. The delight that I derived from a perfect view of the virtues, the talents, and the present domestic enjoyments of Cowper, was suddenly overcast by the darkest and most painful anxiety'—Mrs. Unwin's paralytic stroke, which cast an additional gloom over the devoted pair for the rest of their lives.



You will wonder at the word *desperate* in the second line, and at the *if* in the third ; but could you have any conception of the fear I have had to battle with, of the dejection of spirits that I have suffered concerning this journey, you would wonder much more that I still courageously persevere in my resolution to undertake it. Fortunately for my intentions, it happens that as the day approaches my terrors abate, for, had they continued to be what they were a week since, I must, after all, have disappointed you ; and was actually once on the verge of doing it. I have told you something of my nocturnal experiences, and assure you now that they were hardly ever more terrific than on this occasion. Prayer has, however, opened my passage at last, and obtained for me a degree of confidence that I trust will prove a comfortable viaticum to me all the way. On Wednesday, therefore, we set forth.

The terrors that I have spoken of would appear ridiculous to most ; but to you they will not, for you are a reasonable creature, and know well that to whatever cause it be owing (whether to constitution, or to God's express appointment) I am hunted by spiritual hounds in the night season. I cannot help it. You will pity me, and wish it were otherwise ; and though you may think there is much of the imaginary in it, will not deem it for that reason an evil less to be lamented. So much for fears and distresses. Soon I hope they shall all have a joyful termination, and I, my Mary, my Johnny, and my dog, be skipping with delight at Eartham.<sup>1</sup>

Well, this picture is at last finished, and well finished, I can assure you.<sup>2</sup> Every creature that has seen it has been astonished at the resemblance. Sam's boy bowed to it, and Beau walked up to it wagging his tail as he went, and evidently showing that he acknowledged its likeness to his master. It is a half length, as it is technically, but absurdly called ; that is to say, it gives all but the foot and ankle.

<sup>1</sup> Cowper and Mrs. Unwin paid their return visit to Hayley at his beautiful home at Eartham, near Chichester, in August and September of this year, but they were glad to get back to Weston. 'The genius of that place', he tells Lady Hesketh, 'suits me better, it has an air of snug concealment, in which a disposition like mine feels peculiarly gratified ; whereas here I see from every window woods like forests, and hills like mountains, a wildness, in short, that rather increases my natural melancholy, and which, were it not for the agreeables I find within, would soon convince me that mere change of place can avail me little'.

<sup>2</sup> The portrait painted by Lemuel Abbot.

To-morrow it goes to town, and will hang some months at Abbot's, when it will be sent to its due destination in Norfolk.

I hope, or rather wish, that at Eartham I may recover that habit of study, which, inveterate as it once seemed, I now seem to have lost,—lost to such a degree, that it is even painful to me to think of what it will cost me to acquire it again.

Adieu, my dear, dear Hayley ; God give us a happy meeting ! Mary sends her love. She is in pretty good plight this morning, having slept well, and for her part has no fears at all about the journey.

Ever yours,  
W. C.

WILLIAM COWPER TO WILLIAM HAYLEY

[*Meets Milton in dreamland*]

February 24, 1793.

OH, you rogue, what would you give to have such a dream about Milton as I had about a week since ? I dreamed that being in a house in the city, and with much company, looking towards the lower end of the room from the upper end of it, I descried a figure, which I immediately knew to be Milton's. He was very gravely but very neatly attired in the fashion of his day, and had a countenance which filled me with those feelings that an affectionate child has for a beloved father ; such, for instance, as Tom has for you. My first thought was wonder where he could have been concealed so many years ; my second, a transport of joy to find him still alive ; my third, another transport to find myself in his company ; and my fourth, a resolution to accost him. I did so, and he received me with a complacence, in which I saw equal sweetness and dignity. I spoke of his *Paradise Lost*, as every man must who is worthy to speak of it at all, and told him a long story of the manner in which it affected me when I first discovered it, being at that time a schoolboy. He answered me with a smile and a gentle inclination of his head. He then grasped my hand affectionately, and with a smile that charmed me said, ' Well, you for your part will do well also '. At last, recollecting his great age (for I understood him to be two hundred years old), I feared that I might fatigue

him by much talking ; I took my leave, and he took his with an air of the most perfect breeding. His person, his features, his manner, were all so perfectly characteristic, that I am persuaded an apparition of him could not represent him more completely. This may be said to have been one of the dreams of Pindus, may it not ?

WILLIAM COWPER TO LADY HESKETH

[*The last depths of despair*]

Mundesley, *October* 13, 1798.

DEAR COUSIN,—

You describe delightful scenes, but you describe them to one who, if he ever saw them, could receive no delight from them—who has a faint recollection, and so faint as to be like an almost forgotten dream, that once he was susceptible of pleasure from such causes. The country that you have had in prospect has been always famed for its beauties ; but the wretch who can derive no gratification from a view of nature, even under the advantage of her most ordinary dress, will have no eyes to admire her in any. In one day, in one moment I should rather have said, she became an *universal blank* to me, and, though from a different cause, yet with an effect as difficult to remove as blindness itself. In this country if there are not mountains, there are hills ; if not broad and deep rivers, yet such as are sufficient to embellish a prospect ; and an object still more magnificent than any river, the ocean itself, is almost immediately under the window. Why is scenery like this, I had almost said, why is the very scene, which many years since I could not contemplate without rapture, now become, at the best, an insipid wilderness to me ? It neighbours nearly, and as nearly resembles the scenery at Catfield ; but with what different perceptions does it present me ! The reason is obvious. My state of mind is a medium through which the beauties of Paradise itself could not be communicated with any effect but a painful one.

There is a wide interval between us, which it would be far easier for you than for me to pass. Yet I should in vain invite you. We shall meet no more. I know not what Mr. Johnson said of me in the long letter he addressed to you

yesterday, but nothing, I am sure, that could make such an event seem probable.

I remain, as usual, dear cousin,

Yours,

WM. COWPER.

## ROBERT BURNS

1759-1796

BURNS is not at his best in his correspondence. He is too affected, too often insincere, to be remembered among the great letter-writers of the eighteenth century—partly because he was never so much at home with English prose as with Scottish verse, partly because he formed his style upon some volumes of Polite Letters which he appears to have come across as a lad. When he remembers his models, 'his manner', as Mr. Andrew Lang has remarked, 'is amazing'. Our selection follows the poet in his ups and downs through most of his troubled life, beginning with his doleful letter to his father from Irvine, while engaged in his luckless speculation as a flax-dresser. The depression must, to some extent, have been due to his unsuccessful love affair with Ellison Begbie, the rustic serving girl who declined his hand just before he started his flax-dressing venture, but he had his bouts of merry-making at Irvine, as well as of melancholia, and it is not very surprising to find that four days after writing this letter to his father he lost all his flax by fire in a New Year's revel. He returned home, and the next letter, which comes from the family farmstead of Lochlea, shows the poet in a more self-satisfied mood. A year later he lost 'the best of fathers', and, with his brother Gilbert, took another farm—the Mossiel, made famous by so many important events in the life of Burns. Here, with the best intentions in the world, he made but a poor farmer, yet wrote much of his best work, and fought hard to 'act a manly part'. Here, too, Jean Armour entered into his life, to become, for the time being, 'the goddess of his idolatry.' The sequel is too well known to need enlarging upon now, but the facts prove conclusively that it was not Burns's fault that he did not make a home for Jean when it was discovered that she was about to become a mother. Nor did Jean, on the other hand, deserve all the censure which Burns heaped upon her in his letter to David Brice, dated June 12, 1786. Jean, persuaded by her father to disown the poet, though he had given her a writing which, by Scottish law, was equivalent to a marriage, had by that time been exiled to Paisley, and the rumours of her unfaithfulness, which led him to write in this strain, were unfounded. Meantime the poet himself, thrown off by Jean and her people, had sought and found consolation in the heart of Mary Campbell—'Highland Mary'—who pledged her love to him in his hour of humiliation, promising to wait while he prepared a home for her in the West Indies. 'The Highland Lassie', however, died a few months later, and the poet's passion for her proved but one of many cross-currents in the main stream of his affection for Jean Armour. It was in the same eventful year, as described in the letter to Brice, that the Kilmarnock edition of Burns's poems went to press, to bring fame to the poet while his private affairs were in the most distress-

ing condition imaginable—Jean's father pursuing him at law in order to extort money from him, and he himself skulking to avoid arrest that he might join his ship for Jamaica. The outcome of it all was the memorable visit to Edinburgh, where the 'heaven-taught ploughman', as Henry Mackenzie hailed him, became the lion of the season, but pined the while in secret wretchedness, as he tells his friend Aiken, from, 'the pangs of disappointment, the sting of pride, with some wandering stabs of remorse'—and then fell in love with 'Clarinda'. The last of our Burns letters, which gather up the remaining threads of his tangled story—his final attempts at farming, his home-making at last with Jean Armour as his wife, his life as exciseman at a salary of £70, and the struggle with poverty which fretted his proud spirit to the end—may be left, with their occasional notes, to speak for themselves.

#### ROBERT BURNS TO HIS FATHER

[*Melancholy prospects at twenty-three*]

Irvine, *December 27, 1781.*

HONOURED SIR,—

I have purposely delayed writing, in the hope that I should have the pleasure of seeing you on New Year's Day; but work comes so hard upon us, that I do not choose to be absent on that account, as well as for some other little reasons which I shall tell you at meeting. My health is nearly the same as when you were here, only my sleep is a little sounder; and on the whole I am rather better than otherwise, though I mend by very slow degrees. The weakness of my nerves has so debilitated my mind, that I dare neither review past events, nor look forward into futurity; for the least anxiety or perturbation in my breast produces most unhappy effects on my whole frame. Sometimes, indeed, when for an hour or two my spirits are alightened, I glimmer a little into futurity; but my principal, and indeed, my only pleasurable employment is looking backwards and forwards in a moral and religious way: I am quite transported at the thought, that ere long—perhaps very soon, I shall bid an eternal adieu to all the pains, and uncasiness, and disquietudes of this weary life; for I assure you I am heartily tired of it; and if I do not very much deceive myself, I could contentedly and gladly resign it.

The soul, uneasy and confined at home,  
Rests and expatiates in a life to come.

It is for this reason I am more pleased with the 15th, 16th, and



17th of the seventh chapter of Revelations,<sup>1</sup> than with any ten times as many verses in the whole Bible, and would not exchange the noble enthusiasm with which they inspire me, for all that this world has to offer. As for this world, I despair of ever making a figure in it. I am not formed for the bustle of the busy, nor the flutter of the gay. I shall never again be capable of entering into such scenes. Indeed, I am altogether unconcerned at the thoughts of this life. I foresee that poverty and obscurity probably await me, and I am in some measure prepared, and daily preparing to meet them. I have but just time and paper to return you my grateful thanks for the lessons of virtue and piety you have given me, which were too much neglected at the time of giving them, but which I hope have been remembered ere it is yet too late. Present my dutiful respects to my mother, and my compliments to Mr. and Mrs. Muir; and with wishing you a merry New Year's Day, I shall conclude.

I am, honoured sir, your dutiful son,

ROBERT BURNS.

PS. My Meal<sup>2</sup> is out, but I am going to borrow, till I get more.

ROBERT BURNS TO HIS OLD TEACHER, JOHN MURDOCH.

[*Better pleased with himself*]

LOCHLEA, January 15, 1783.

DEAR SIR,—

As I have an opportunity of sending you a letter without putting you to that expense which any production of mine would but ill repay, I embrace it with pleasure, to tell you that I have not forgotten, nor ever will forget, the many obligations I lie under to your kindness and friendship.

I do not doubt, sir, but you will wish to know what has been the result of all the pains of an indulgent father, and a masterly teacher; and I wish I could gratify your curiosity with such

<sup>1</sup> The verses referred to are:—

15. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them.

16. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat.

17. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.

<sup>2</sup> His regular stock of oatmeal, etc., from the home stores.

a recital as you would be pleased with ; but that is what I am afraid will not be the ease. I have, indeed, kept pretty clear of vicious habits ; and, in this respect, I hope my conduct will not disgrace the education I have gotten ; but as a man of the world I am most miserably deficient. One would have thought that, bred as I have been, under a father who has figured pretty well as *un homme des affaires*, I might have been what the world calls a pushing, active fellow ; but to tell you the truth, sir, there is hardly anything more my reverse. I seem to be one sent into the world to see and observe ; and I very easily compound with the knave who tricks me of my money, if there be anything original about him, which shows me human nature in a different light from anything I have seen before. In short, the joy of my heart is to ‘ study men, their manners, and their ways ’, and for this darling subject I cheerfully sacrifice every other consideration. I am quite indolent about those great concerns that set the bustling, busy sons of care agog ; and if I have to answer for the present hour, I am very easy with regard to anything further. Even the last, worst shift of the unfortunate and the wretched<sup>1</sup> does not much terrify me ; I know that even then my talent for what country-folks call ‘ a sensible crack ’,<sup>2</sup> when once it is sanctified by a hoary head, would procure me so much esteem that even then I would learn to be happy. However, I am under no apprehensions about that ; for though indolent, yet so far as an extremely delicate constitution permits, I am not lazy ; and in many things, especially in tavern matters, I am a strict economist,—not, indeed, for the sake of the money, but one of the principal parts in my composition is a kind of pride of stomach ; and I scorn to fear the face of any man living ; above everything, I abhor as hell the idea of sneaking into a corner to avoid a dun—possibly some pitiful, sordid wretch, who in my heart I despise and detest. ’Tis this, and this alone, that endears economy to me. In the matter of books, indeed, I am very profuse. My favourite authors are of the sentimental kind, such as Shenstone, particularly his *Elegies* ; Thomson ; *Man of feeling*, a book I prize next to the Bible ; *Man of the World* ; Sterne, especially his *Sentimental Journey* ; Maepher’s *Ossian*, etc. ;—these are the glorious models after

<sup>1</sup> Apparently meaning the condition of a vagrant beggar.

<sup>2</sup> A rational chat.

which I endeavour to form my conduct ; and 'tis incongruous, 'tis absurd, to suppose that the man whose mind glows with sentiments lighted up at their sacred flame, the man whose heart distends with benevolence to all the human race,—he ' who can soar above this little scene of things ',—can descend to mind the paltry concerns about which the terræ-filial race fret, and fume, and vex themselves ! Oh, how the glorious triumph swells my heart ! I forget that I am a poor, insignificant devil, unnoticed and unknown, stalking up and down fairs and markets, when I happen to be in them, reading a page or two of mankind, and ' catching the manners living as they rise ', whilst the men of business jostle me on every side, as an idle encumbrance in their way. But I daresay I have by this time tired your patience ; so I shall conclude with begging you to give Mrs. Murdoch—not my compliments, for that is a mere commonplace story, but my warmest, kindest wishes for her welfare ; and accept of the same for yourself, from, dear sir, yours,

R. B.

ROBERT BURNS TO DAVID BRICE <sup>1</sup>

[*The distracted lover—and the Kilmarnock edition.*]

MOSSGIEL, *June 12, 1786.*

DEAR BRICE,—

I received your message by G. Paterson, and as I am not very throng <sup>2</sup> at present, I write to let you know that there is such a worthless, rhyming reprobate as your humble servant, still in the land of the living, though I can scarcely say in the place of hope. I have no news to tell you that will give me any pleasure to mention, or you to hear.

Poor ill-advised ungrateful Armour came home on Friday last. You have heard all the particulars of that affair, and a black affair it is. What she thinks of her conduct now I don't know : one thing I do know, she has made me completely miserable. Never man loved, or rather adored, a woman more than I did her ; and, to confess a truth between you and me, I do still love her to distraction after all, though I won't tell her if I were to see her, which I don't want to do. My poor dear unfortunate Jean, how happy I

<sup>1</sup> A shoemaker in Glasgow.

<sup>2</sup> Busy.

have been in thy arms ! It is not the losing her that makes me so unhappy, but for her sake I feel most severely. I foresee she is in the road to, I am afraid, eternal ruin.

May Almighty God forgive her ingratitude and perjury to me, as I from my very soul forgive her ; and may his grace be with her and bless her in all her future life ! I can have no nearer idea of the place of eternal punishment than what I have felt in my own breast on her account. I have tried often to forget her ; I have run into all kinds of dissipation and riots, mason-meetings, drinking-matches, and other mischief, to drive her out of my head, but all in vain. And now for a grand curc ; the ship is on her way home that is to take me out to Jamaica <sup>1</sup> ; and then, farewell, dear old Scotland, and farewell, dear ungrateful Jean, for never, never will I see you more.

You will have heard that I am going to commence poet in print ; and to-morrow my work goes to the press.<sup>2</sup> I expect it will be a volume of about 200 pages—it is just the last foolish action I intend to do ; and then turn a wise man as fast as possible. Believe me to be, dear Brice, your friend and well-wisher,

R. B.

ROBERT BURNS TO ROBERT AIKEN <sup>3</sup>

[*‘Wandering stabs of remorse’*]

About October, 1786.

SIR,—

I was with Wilson, my printer, t’other day, and settled all our bygone matters between us. After I had paid all demands I made him the offer of the second edition, on the hazard of being paid out of the first and readiest, which he declines. By his account the paper of 1,000 copies would cost about £27, and the printing about £15 or £16 ; he offers to agree to this for the printing if I will advance for the paper, but this, you know, is out of my power ; so farewell hopes of a second

<sup>1</sup> Burns had been offered the post of overseer of an estate in Jamaica at £30 a year.

<sup>2</sup> The famous Kilmarnock edition, published by John Wilson at the end of July, 1786. The edition of 600 copies was quickly exhausted, and put about twenty pounds into the poet’s pocket. A few years ago a single copy of this precious edition fetched £572 5s.

<sup>3</sup> A legal practitioner of Ayr and one of the earliest admirers of Burns’s verses. It was to Robert Aiken that the poet dedicated his ‘Cotter’s Saturday Night’.

edition till I grow richer, an epocha which I think will arrive at the payment of the British national debt.

There is scarcely anything hurts me so much in being disappointed of my second edition, as not having it in my power to show my gratitude to Mr. Ballantine, by publishing my poem of *The Brigs of Ayr*.<sup>1</sup> I would detest myself as a wretch if I thought I were capable in a very long life of forgetting the honest, warm, and tender delicacy with which he enters into my interests. I am sometimes pleased with myself in my grateful sensations; but I believe, on the whole, I have very little merit in it, as my gratitude is not a virtue, the consequence of reflection, but sheerly the instinctive emotion of my heart, too inattentive to allow worldly maxims and views to settle into selfish habits.

I have been feeling all the various rotations and movements within respecting the excise. There are many things plead strongly against it; the uncertainty of getting soon into business; the consequence of my follies, which may perhaps make it impracticable for me to stay at home; and, besides, I have for some time been pining under secret wretchedness from causes from which you pretty well know—the pang of disappointment, the sting of pride, with some wandering stabs of remorse,<sup>2</sup> which never fail to settle on my vitals like vultures, when attention is not called away by the calls of society or the vagaries of the muse. Even in the hour of social mirth, my gaiety is the madness of an intoxicated criminal under the hands of the executioner. All these reasons urge me to go abroad, and to all these reasons I have only one answer—the feelings of a father.<sup>3</sup> This, in the present mood I am in, overbalances everything that can be laid in the scale against me.

You may perhaps think it is an extravagant fancy, but it is a sentiment which strikes home to my very soul; though

<sup>1</sup> John Ballantine, banker and early patron of Burns, was chief magistrate of Ayr during the building of the new 'Brig', and Burns seized the occasion to make some return of gratitude by inscribing the poem to him.

<sup>2</sup> If Robert Chambers is correct in assuming that some of the 'wandering stabs of remorse' relate to Mary Campbell we have here the one reference to 'Highland Mary' in the whole of Burns's extant correspondence. 'He might have some sense of remorse about this simple girl', writes Chambers, '—he might feel some little shame on account of her humble position in life—he might dread the world's knowing that after the affair of Jean Armour, in the midst of such calamitous circumstances, and, facing a long exile in the West Indies, he had been so madly imprudent as to engage a poor girl to join him in wedlock, whether to go with him or wait for his return'.

<sup>3</sup> Jean Armour had just proved the mother of twins—'a very fine girl and boy'.



sceptical in some points of our current belief, yet I think I have every evidence for the reality of a life beyond the stinted bourne of our present existence ; if so, then how should I, in the presence of that tremendous Being, the Author of existence, how should I meet the reproaches of those who stand to me, in the dear relation of children, whom I deserted in the smiling innocency of helpless infancy ? Oh, thou great unknown Power—thou Almighty God—who hast lighted reason in my breast, and blessed me with immortality—I have frequently wandered from that order and regularity necessary for the perfection of Thy works, yet Thou hast never left me nor forsaken me !

Since I wrote the foregoing sheet, I have seen something of the storm of mischief thickening over my folly-devoted head. Should you, my friends, my benefactors, be successful in your applications for me, perhaps it may not be in my power that way to reap the fruit of your friendly efforts. What I have written in the preceding pages is the settled tenor of my present resolution, but should inimical circumstances forbid me closing with your kind offer, or enjoying it only threaten to entail further misery——

To tell the truth, I have little reason for complaint, as the world in general has been kind to me fully up to my deserts. I was, for some time past, fast getting into the pining, distrustful snarl of the misanthrope. I saw myself alone, unfit for the struggle of life, shrinking at every rising cloud in the chance-directed atmosphere of fortune, while, all defenceless, I looked about in vain for a cover. It never occurred to me, at least, never with the force it deserved, that this world is a busy scene, and man a creature destined for a progressive struggle ; and that however I might possess a warm heart and inoffensive manners (which last, by the by, was rather more than I could well boast), still, more than these passive qualities, there was something to be done. When all my schoolfellows and youthful compeers (those misguided few excepted, who joined, to use a Gentoo phrase, the ‘ halla-chores ’ of the human race) were striking off with eager hope and earnest intent in some one or other of the many paths of busy life, I ‘ was standing idle in the market-place ’, or only left the chase of the butterfly from flower to flower, to hunt fancy from whim to whim.

You see, sir, that if to know one's errors were a probability of mending them, I stand a fair chance ; but according to the reverend Westminster divines, though conviction must precede conversion, it is very far from always implying it.

R. B.

ROBERT BURNS TO THE EARL OF GLENCAIRN <sup>1</sup>

[*A pathetic appeal*]

Edinburgh, 1787.

MY LORD,—

I know your lordship will disapprove of my ideas in a request I am going to make to you ; but I have weighed, long and seriously weighed, my situation, my hopes and turn of mind, and am fully fixed to my scheme if I can possibly effectuate it. I wish to get into the Excise. I am told that your lordship's interest will easily procure me the grant from the Commissioners ; and your lordship's patronage and goodness, which have already rescued me from obscurity, wretchedness, and exile, embolden me to ask that interest. You have likewise put it in my power to save the little tie of home that sheltered an aged mother, two brothers, and three sisters from destruction. There, my lord, you have bound me over to the highest gratitude. My brother's farm is but a wretched lease, but I think he will probably weather out the remaining seven years of it ; and after the assistance which I have given and will give him, to keep the family together, I think, by my guess, I shall have rather better than two hundred pounds, and instead of seeking what is almost impossible at present to find, a farm that I can certainly live by, with so small a stock, I shall lodge this sum in a banking-house, a sacred deposit, excepting only the calls of uncommon distress or neccssitous old age.

These, my lord, are my views ; I have resolved from the maturest deliberation ; and now I am fixed, I shall leave no stone unturned to carry my resolve into execution. Your lordship's patronage is the strength of my hopes ; nor have I yet applied to anybody else. Indeed my heart sinks within me at the idea of applying to any other of the great who have honoured me with their countenance. I am ill-qualified to

<sup>1</sup> It was Glencairn who ensured the success of the second edition of Burns's poems in this year, by inducing the whole of the Caledonian Hunt to subscribe for it.

dog the heels of greatness with the impertinence of solicitation,  
and tremble nearly as much at the thought of the cold promise  
as the cold denial ; but to your lordship I have not only the  
honour, the comfort, but the pleasure of being

Your lordship's much obliged  
And deeply indebted humble servant,  
R. B.

ROBERT BURNS TO MRS. DUNLOP <sup>1</sup>

[*'The bard, his situation and his views'*]

Edinburgh, *March 22, 1787.*

MADAM,—

I read your letter with watery eyes. A little, very little while ago, I had scarce a friend but the stubborn pride of my own bosom ; now I am distinguished, patronized, befriended by you. Your friendly advices, I will not give them the cold name of criticisms, I receive with reverence. I have made some small alteration in what I before had printed. I have the advice of some very judicious friends among the literati here ; but with them I sometimes find it necessary to claim the privilege of thinking for myself. The noble Earl of Glencairn, to whom I owe more than to any man, does me the honour of giving me his strictures : his hints, with respect to impropriety, or indelicacy, I follow implicitly.

You kindly interest yourself in my future views and prospects ; there I can give you no light. It is all

Dark as was chaos, ere the infant sun  
Was roll'd together, or had tried his beams  
Athwart the gloom profound.

<sup>1</sup> 'Of all the friendships which Robert acquired in Ayrshire and elsewhere', writes Gilbert Burns, the poet's brother, 'none seemed more agreeable to him than that of Mrs. Dunlop of Dunlop, nor any which has been more uniformly and constantly exerted on behalf of him and his family, of which, were it proper, I could give many instances. Robert was on the point of setting out for Edinburgh before Mrs. Dunlop had heard of him. About the time of my brother's publishing in Kilmarnock, she had been afflicted with a long and severe illness, which had reduced her mind to the most distressing state of depression. In this situation a copy of the printed poems was laid on her table by a friend ; and, happening to open on "The Cotter's Saturday Night", she read it over with the greatest pleasure and surprise, the poet's description of the simple cottager operating on her mind like the charm of a powerful exorcist, expelling the demon ennui, and restoring her to her wonted harmony and satisfaction. Mrs. Dunlop sent off a person express to Mossgiel, distant fifteen or sixteen miles, with a very obliging letter to my brother, desiring him to send her half-a-dozen copies of his poem, if he had them to spare, and begging he would do her the pleasure of calling at Dunlop House as soon as convenient. This was the beginning of a correspondence which ended only with the poet's life'.

The appellation of a Scottish bard is by far my highest pride ; to continue to deserve it is my most exalted ambition. Scottish themes and Scottish story are the themes I could wish to sing. I have no dearer aim than to have it in my power, unplagued with the routine of business, for which, heaven knows, I am unfit enough, to make leisurely pilgrimages through Caledonia ; to sit on the fields of her battles ; to wander on the romantic banks of her rivers ; and to muse by the stately towers or venerable ruins, once the honoured abodes of her heroes. But these are all utopian thoughts. I have dallied long enough with life ; 'tis time to be in earnest. I have a fond, an aged mother to care for ; and some other bosom ties perhaps equally tender. Where the individual only suffers by the consequences of his own thoughtlessness, indolence, or folly, he may be excusable ; nay, shining abilities, and some of the nobler virtues, may half sanctify a heedless character ; but where God and nature have intrusted the welfare of others to his care—where the trust is sacred, and the ties are dear, that man must be far gone in selfishness, or strangely lost to reflection, whom these connexions will not rouse to exertion.

I guess that I shall clear two or three hundred pounds by my authorship ; with that sum I intend, so far as I may be said to have any intention, to return to my old acquaintancce the plough ; and, if I can meet with a lease by which I can live, to commence farmer. I do not intend to give up poetry ; being bred to labour, secures me independence, and the Muses are my chief, sometimes have been my only enjoyment. If my practice second my resolution, I shall have principally at heart the serious business of life ; but while following my plough, or building up my shocks, I shall cast a leisure glance to that dear—that only feature of my character, which gave me the notice of my country and the patronage of a Wallace.<sup>1</sup>

Thus, honoured Madam, I have given you the bard, his situation, and his views, native as they are in his own bosom.

R. B.

<sup>1</sup> Mrs. Dunlop, as daughter of Sir Thomas Wallace of Craigie, was regarded as a direct descendant of the Scottish patriot and hero of romance, though in reality, as Chambers points out, her father's ancestor was only the brother of Wallace.

ROBERT BURNS TO WILLIAM NICOL<sup>1</sup>[*Home from Edinburgh and the Border tour*]

Mauchline, June 18, 1787.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—

I am now arrived safe in my native country, after a very agreeable jaunt, and have the pleasure to find all my friends well. . . . I am quite charmed with Dumfries folks—Mr. Burnside, the clergyman, in particular, is a man whom I shall ever gratefully remember; and his wife, guid forgie me! I had almost broke the tenth commandment on her account. Simplicity, elegance, good sense, sweetness of disposition, good-humour, kind hospitality, are the constituents of her manner and heart; in short—but if I say one word more about her, I shall be directly in love with her.

I never, my friend, thought mankind very capable of anything generous; but the stateliness of the patricians in Edinburgh, and the civility of my plebeian brethren (who perhaps formerly eyed me askance) since I returned home, have nearly put me out of conceit altogether with my species. I have bought a pocket Milton, which I carry perpetually about with me, in order to study the sentiments, the dauntless magnanimity, the intrepid, unyielding independence, the desperate daring, and noble defiance of hardship, in that great personage, Satan.

'Tis true I have just now a little cash; but I am afraid the star that hitherto has shed its malignant, purpose-blasting rays full in my zenith; that noxious planet, so baneful in its influences to the rhyming tribe, I much dread it, is not yet beneath my horizon. Misfortune dodges the path of human life; the poetic mind finds itself miserably deranged in, and unfit for, the walks of business; add to all, that thoughtless follies and hair-brained whims, like so many *ignes fatui* eternally diverging from the right line of sober discretion, sparkle with step-bewitching blaze in the idly-gazing eyes of the poor heedless bard, till pop, 'he falls like Lucifer, never to hope again'. God grant this may be an unreal picture with respect to me! But should it not, I have very little dependence on

<sup>1</sup> Friend of Burns and classical master at Edinburgh High School. In the following August they visited the Highlands together. William Nicol is the dissipated tyrant described by Scott in his account of his schooldays, and immortalized in Burns's 'Willie brewed a peck o' maut'.



mankind. I will elose my letter with this tribute my heart bids me pay you—the many ties of acquaintance and friendship which I have, or think I have in life, I have felt along the lines, and, damn them, they are almost all of them of such frail contexture, that I am sure they would not stand the breath of the least adverse breeze of fortune ; but from you, my ever dear sir, I look with confidence for the apostolic love that shall wait on me ‘through good report and bad report’—the love which Solomon emphatically says ‘is strong as death’. My compliments to Mrs. Nicol, and all the eirele of our common friends.

PS. I shall be in Edinburgh about the latter end of July.

R. B.

ROBERT BURNS TO JAMES SMITH<sup>1</sup>

[‘*A rhyming, mason-making, raking, aimless, idle fellow*’]

June 30, 1787.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—

On our return, at a Highland gentleman’s hospitable mansion we fell in with a merry party, and danced till the ladies left us at three in the morning. Our dancing was none of the French or English insipid, formal movements. The ladies sang Scotch songs at intervals like angels ; then we flew at ‘Bab at the Bowster’, ‘Tulloehgorum’, ‘Loeherroeh Side’, etc., like midges sporting in the mottie sun, or craws prognosticating a storm in a hairst day. When the dear lasses left us, we ranged round the bowl till the good-fellow hour of six ; except a few minutes that we went out to pay our devotions to the glorious lamp of day peering over the towering top of Ben Lomond. We all kneeled. Our worthy landlord’s son held the bowl, each man a full glass in his hand, and I, as priest, repeated some rhyming nonsense ; like Thomas the Rhymer’s prophecies, I suppose.

After a small refreshment of the gifts of Somnus, we proceeded to spend the day on Loch Lomond, and reached Dumbarton in the evening. We dined at another good fellow’s house, and consequently pushed the bottle ; when we went out to mount our horses, we found ourselves ‘no very fou, but

<sup>1</sup> One of the poet’s bosom friends.

gayly yet'. My two friends and I rode soberly down the loch side, till by came a Highlandman at the gallop on a tolerably good horse, but which had never known the ornaments of iron or leather. We scorned to be out-galloped by a Highlandman, so off we started, whip and spur. My companions, though seemingly gaily mounted, fell sadly astern; but my old mare, Jenny Geddes, one of the Rosinante family, strained past the Highlandman, in spite of all his efforts with the hair halter. Just as I was passing him, Donald wheeled his horse, as if to cross before me to mar my progress, when down came his horse, and threw his rider's breechless bottom into a elipt hedge, and down came Jenny Geddes over all, and my bardship between her and the Highlandman's horse. Jenny trode over me with such cautious reverence that matters were not so bad as might well have been expected; so I came off with a few cuts and bruises, and a thorough resolution to be a pattern of sobriety for the future.

I have yet fixed on nothing with respect to the serious business of life. I am, just as usual, a rhyming, mason-making, raking, aimless, idle fellow. However, I shall somewhere have a farm soon. I was going to say a wife too; but that must never be my blessed lot. I am but a younger son of the house of Parnassus, and, like other younger sons of great families, I may intrigue, if I choose to run all risks, but must not marry.

I am afraid I have almost ruined one souree, the principal one, indeed, of my former happiness—that eternal propensity I always had to fall in love. My heart no more glows with feverish rapture. I have no paradisaical evening interviews stolen from the restless cares and prying inhabitants of this weary world. I have only. . . .<sup>1</sup> This last is one of your distant acquaintances, has a fine figure, and elegant manners, and, in the train of some great folks whom you know, has seen the politest quarters in Europe. I do like her a good deal, but what piques me is her conduct at the commencement of our acquaintance. I frequently visited her when I was in —; and after passing regularly the intermediate degrees between the distant formal bow and the familiar grasp

<sup>1</sup> 'No safe conjecture can be formed', says Robert Chambers in printing this letter, 'of the person meant, beyond that of her being an Ayrshire lady.'

round the waist, I ventured, in my careless way, to talk of friendship in rather ambiguous terms; and after her return to —, I wrote to her in the same style. Miss, construing my words farther, I suppose, than even I intended, flew off in a tangent of female dignity and reserve like a mounting lark in an April morning; and wrote me an answer which measured me out very completely what an immense way I had to travel before I could reach the climax of her favour. But I am an old hawk at the sport; and wrote her such a cool, deliberate, prudent reply, as brought my bird from her aerial towerings pop down at my foot like Corporal Trim's hat.

As for the rest of my aets, and my wars, and all my wise sayings, and why my mare was called Jenny Gddes, they shall be recorded in a few weeks hence, at Linlithgow, in the chronicles of your memory, by

ROBERT BURNS.

ROBERT BURNS TO MISS CHALMERS <sup>1</sup>

[*The new exciseman*]

Edinburgh, February 17, 1788.

TO-MORROW, my dear madam, I leave Edinburgh. I have altered all my plans of future life. A farm that I could live in, I could not find; and, indeed, after the necessary support my brother and the rest of my family required, I could not venture on farming in that style suitable to my feelings. You will condemn me for the next step I have taken: I have entered into the Excise. I stay in the west about three weeks, and then return to Edinburgh for six weeks' instructions; afterwards, for I get employ instantly, I go *où il plaît à Dieu—et mon roi*. I have chosen this, my dear friend, after mature deliberation. The question is not at what door of fortune's palace shall we enter in, but what doors does she open to us? I was not likely to get anything to do. I wanted *un bû*,

<sup>1</sup> Burns delighted in the society of Margaret Chalmers—whom he celebrated as 'Peggy' in a couple of his songs—and her friend Charlotte Hamilton. 'Charlotte and you', he wrote to Margaret on one occasion, 'are just two resting-places for my soul in her wanderings through the weary, thorny wilderness of this world'. Robert Chambers remarks that the character of Margaret Chalmers stands as a testimony in favour of that of Burns. 'Without a certain natural refinement of soul it was impossible that he could have induced such a woman to grant him her friendship'.

which is a dangerous, an unhappy situation. I got this without any hanging on, or mortifying solicitation; it is immediate bread; and though poor in comparison of the last eighteen months of my existence, 'tis luxury in comparison of all my preceding life: besides, the commissioners are some of them my acquaintance, and all of them firm friends.

R. B.

ROBERT BURNS TO MISS CHALMERS, EDINBURGH

[*Properly married at last*]

Ellisland, near Dumfries, September 16, 1788.

WHERE are you? and how are you? and is Lady Mackenzie<sup>1</sup> recovering her health?—for I have had but one solitary letter from you. I will not think you have forgot me, madam, and for my part—

When thee, Jerusalem, I forget  
Skill part from my right hand.

'My heart is not of that rock, nor my soul careless as that sea'. I do not make my progress among mankind as a bowl among its fellows—rolling through the crowd without bearing away any mark or impression, except where they hit in hostile collision.

I am here, driven in with my harvest-folks by bad weather; and as you and your sister once did me the honour of interesting yourselves much *à l'égard de moi*, I sit down to beg the continuation of your goodness. I can truly say that, all the exterior of life apart, I never saw two whose esteem flattered the nobler feelings of my soul—I will not say more, but so much—as Lady Mackenzie and Miss Chalmers. When I think of you—hearts the best, minds the noblest of human kind, unfortunate even in the shades of life—when I think I have met with you, and have lived more of real life with you in eight days than I can do with almost anybody I meet with in eight years—when I think on the improbability of meeting you in this world again, I could sit down and cry like a child! If ever you honoured me with a place in your esteem, I trust I can now plead more desert. I am secure against that crush-

<sup>1</sup> Margaret Chalmers's elder sister.

ing grip of iron poverty, which, alas ! is less or more fatal to the native worth and purity of, I fear, the noblest souls ; and a late important step in my life has kindly taken me out of the way of those ungrateful iniquities, which, however overlooked in fashionable licence, or varnished in fashionable phrase, are indeed but lighter and deeper shades of VILLANY.

Shortly after my last return to Ayrshire I married ' my Jean '. This was not in consequence of the attachment of romance, perhaps ; but I had a long and much-loved fellow-creature's happiness or misery in my determination, and I durst not trifle with so important a deposit. Nor have I any cause to repent it. If I have not got polite tattle, modish manners, and fashionable dress, I am not sickened and disgusted with the multiform curse of boarding school affectation ; and I have got the handsomest figure, the sweetest temper, the soundest constitution, and the kindest heart in the county. Mrs. Burns believes, as firmly as her creed, that I am *le plus bel esprit, et le plus honnête homme* in the universe ; although she scarcely ever in her life, except the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament, and the Psalms of David in metre, spent five minutes together on either prose or verse. I must except also from this last a certain late publication of Scots poems, which she has perused very devoutly, and all the ballads in the country, as she has (Oh, the partial lover ! you will cry) the finest " wood-note wild " I ever heard. I am the more particular in this lady's character, as I know she will henceforth have the honour of a share in your best wishes. She is still at Mauchline, as I am building my house ; for this hovel that I shelter in, while occasionally here, is pervious to every blast that blows, and every shower that falls ; and I am only preserved from being chilled to death by being suffocated with smoke. I do not find my farm that penny-worth I was taught to expect ; but I believe in time it may be a saving bargain.

You will be pleased to hear that I have laid aside idle *éclat*, and bind every day after my prayers.

To save me from that horrid situation of at any time going down, in a losing bargain of a farm, to misery, I have taken my Excise instructions, and have my commission in my pocket for any emergency of fortune. If I could set all before your view, whatever disrespect you, in common with the



world, have for this business, I know you will approve of my idea.

I will make no apology, dear madam, for this egotistic detail ; I know you and your sister will be interested in every circumstance of it. What signify the silly, idle gewgaws of wealth, or the ideal trumpery of greatness ! When fellow-partakers of the same nature fear the same God, have the same benevolence of heart, the same nobleness of soul, the same detestation at everything dishonest, and the same scorn at everything unworthy—if they are not in the dependence of absolute beggary, in the name of common sense, are they not EQUALS ? And if the bias, the instinctive bias of their souls run the same way, why may they not be friends ? . . .

R. B.

ROBERT BURNS TO MR. GRAHAM OF FINTRAY.

[*In political disgrace*]

*December, 1792.*

SIR,—

I have been surprised, confounded, and distracted by Mr. Mitchell, the collector, telling me that he has received an order from your board to inquire into my political conduct, and blaming me as a person disaffected to government.<sup>1</sup>

Sir, you are a husband—and a father. You know what you would feel to see the much-loved wife of your bosom, and your helpless, prattling little ones, turned adrift into the world, degraded and disgraced from a situation in which they had been respectable and respected, and left almost without the necessary support of a miserable existence. Alas, sir ! must I think that such soon will be my lot ! and from the d——d, dark insinuations of hellish, groundless envy, too ! I believe, sir, I may aver it, and in the sight of Omniscience, that I would not tell a deliberate falsehood, no, not though even worse horrors, if worse can be, than those I have mentioned, hung over my head ; and I say, that the allegation,

<sup>1</sup> But for the mediation of his patron, Mr. Graham, it is believed that Burns would have lost his post as exciseman through his Jacobite sentiments and open sympathy with the French democracy. He proved his loyalty in 1795 by joining a volunteer corps, and by his song, 'The Dumfries Volunteers', probably, as Mr. Andrew Lang says, 'recovered much of the goodwill which his Gallophile sentiments had lost'.

whatever villain has made it, is a lie ! To the British constitution, on Revolution principles, next after my God, I am most devoutly attached. You, sir, have been much and generously my friend. Heaven knows how warmly I have felt the obligation and how gratefully I have thanked you. Fortune, sir, has made you powerful, and me impotent ; has given you patronage, and me dependence. I would not for my single self call on your humanity ; were such my insular, unconnected situation, I would despise the tear that now swells in my eye—I could brave misfortune, I could face ruin ; for at the worst, ‘Death’s thousand doors stand open’ ; but, good God ! the tender concerns that I have mentioned, the claims and ties that I see at this moment, and feel around me, how they unnerve courage and wither resolution ! To your patronage, as a man of some genius, you have allowed me a claim ; and your esteem, as an honest man, I know is my due : to these, sir, permit me to appeal ; by these may I adjure you to save me from that misery which threatens to overwhelm me, and which, with my latest breath I will say it, I have not deserved.

R. B.

ROBERT BURNS TO GEORGE THOMSON <sup>1</sup>

[*His poverty-stricken end*]

Brow, on the Solway Firth, *July 12, 1796.*

AFTER all my boasted independence, curst necessity compels me to implore you for five pounds. A cruel scoundrel of a haberdasher, to whom I owe an account, taking it into his head that I am dying, has commenced a process, and will infallibly put me into jail. Do, for God’s sake, send me that sum, and that by return of post. Forgive me this earnestness, but the horrors of a jail have made me half distracted. I do not ask all this gratuitously ; for, upon returning health, I

<sup>1</sup> This letter was written only nine days before the poet’s death, and the sorely-needed loan was at once forwarded by Thomson. Burns had been contributing songs to Thomson’s collections of national music since 1792, and Thomson has been attacked by various writers for his pecuniary treatment of the poet, but Burns’s letters to him show that the charge is unjust. In a footnote to the above letter in the ‘Correspondence between Burns and George Thomson’, Thomson writes that Burns’s fears on account of his small debt with a tradesman were exaggerated. ‘He would not have been in any such danger at Dumfries’, he writes, ‘nor could he have been in such necessity to implore aid from Edinburgh’.

hereby promise and engage to furnish you with five pounds' worth of the neatest song-genius you have seen. I tried my hand on Rothiemurchie this morning. The measure is so difficult that it is impossible to infuse much genius into the lines ; they are on the other side. Forgive, forgive me !

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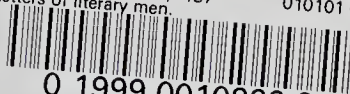
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